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ULYSSES

OR

SCENES AND STUDIES IN MANY LANDS

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BY

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"Qui multorum hominum mores et vidit et urbes."—HORACE.

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BYZANTINE ANATOLIA.

The title of the following Essay, first published in the 'Cornhill Magazine' for April 1873 is, to a certain extent, inaccurate, because covering a much wider territorial extent than that surveyed, however superficially, in the Essay itself, which deals almost exclusively with the district immediately adjacent to Trebizond, better styled, perhaps, "Comnenian" than absolutely "Byzantine." Further away, south and west, Sivas (Sebaste), Kaisereeyah (Cæsarea), Koniyeh (Iconium), Kastemouri, Angora, and many other towns of less general note, are even yet, in population and relics, more genuinely "Byzantine" than Trebizond. But here "inopem me copia fecit," since not an essay but a volume, several volumes, would be needed to set forth aright the yet unchronicled memorials, Byzantine, Roman, or more ancient yet, of those storied lands. Hence I thought it best to restrict my description of men and things within a narrower compass. But whoever following in the footsteps of Curzon,—no second name worthy to be placed alongside of his occurs to me,—shall give us, not an account of his own personal adventures, or misadventures, quarrels with muleteers, bad food, uncomfortable lodgings, and the like, but a true and intelligent view of the life, the monuments, the relics, the survivals of "Byzantine Anatolia" coextensive with its real limits, will set before us a panorama of far greater variety than Central Africa, of deeper interest than even Central Asia, can afford. But the work will be one of years.

SOMEBODY once said, and probably thought himself uncommonly clever for saying it, that broken bottles—empty soda-water bottles is a popular, but I do not know if a correct, version—will one day be the only abiding memorial of British rule in India. Like most of these extremely smart epigrams, the

remark combined a small amount of superficial truth with a much larger quantity of real misstatement. But when the long-predicted day arrives for the Osmanlee to strike the tent he has for so many centuries pitched over some of the very fairest portions of God's earth, I wonder what except broken bottles will remain behind to denote the spot of his protracted encampment. Not literal bottles, but metaphorical, of course, for neither beer nor wine nor even soda-water are—the more's the pity—common enough articles of consumption in the lands of the Crescent to furnish any large amount of vitreous relics; when Osmanlees do violate the anti-alcoholic precepts of their law, it is ordinarily with the vilest "rakee"; and that unwholesome fluid is wont to be dispensed, not in bottles, but in misshapen jars of congenial ugliness and coarseness. No; breakages in plenty he will leave, only they will not be of glass, but of far more precious things; and not of what he imported with him, like the English ware in the hypothesis, but of what he found more or less entire when he came, and afterwards broke on his own account.

This, where I am now writing, is the Osmanlee's own proper or quasi-proper land, this his camping-ground of predilection—Anatolia, the birthplace of his wide-extended empire, its cradle, its stronghold, its reserve hope. And here all around me I see Pontine breakages, Greek breakages, Roman breakages, Byzantine breakages, Armenian breakages, Seljook breakages, not to mention some minor breakages of less world-spread fame, such as Turcoman, Mingrelian, and Georgian; all these there are, and will mostly be still extant too, no doubt, when reckoning-day comes. Nor do I say that they may not, each in its kind, be regarded as Osmanlee breakages after a sort; since they are of things which either he found whole and broke them, or found them broken, and broke them still more. Only of what he has himself brought, himself made, there will be left after the first ten years next to nothing, and after fifty absolutely nothing at all. Relics of genuine Osmanlee labour, of Osmanlee magnificence, of Osmanlee science, art, skill, learning, industry, there will be hardly any, or none—for the

simple reason that he will leave none which can, even at the most liberal computation, outlast half a century. True; the lively author of 'Morning Land' claims an exception in favour of "heaps of broken gravestones." But even this, if we embrace half a century in our prospective view, cannot be admitted; for the tombstones are scratched rather than carved; the feeble and exceptional attempts at a mausoleum are as flimsy as the other constructions; and the vestiges of the dead Osmanlee are evidently fated to not less speedy obliteration than those of the living.

Even at the capital, where the Osmanlee has concentrated his whole energy in an effort not over-successful there, and most ruinous to his dominions elsewhere, at the expense of which that capital has been patched up, these remarks are correct in the main; in the provinces they are absolutely so. And certainly in the frontier corner of the empire, east of Trebizond, where the 'Classic Atlas' marks the uncertain limits of Pontus and Colchis, and where myself and my companions—the usual Eastern medley of colour and race—have now been for ten weeks wandering—zig-zagging I might call it, were not the word inadmissible from its affected uncouthness—among the mountains, dolomitic or otherwise, of that wild region, we have seen, broadly speaking, only one clear and strongly marked sign of Osmanlee rule—that is, ruin.

Needless to say, our journeyings have been all on horseback, except indeed where the unmanageable steepness or dangerous narrowness of the path compelled us to dismount even from those surest-footed of all known quadrupeds, Anatolian nags; for in these favoured regions of countless railroad concessions and projected lines, the most primitive waggon-road that ever led from an English "-ham" to a "-bro" is an unknown luxury. That highways will be constructed by a paternal government throughout the Ottoman dominions, are constructed, are daily traversed by whole processions of wheeled conveyances, are delusions which Mr. Farley of Bristol and his disciples may possibly entertain, but in which a traveller through his Sultanic Majesty's dominions will hardly share.

Horses, mules, camels, asses, even the classical caravan itself, is still, as in the days of Mahomet II. or Marco Polo, the picturesque but clumsy and costly means of transport for the merchandise of the gorgeous East. Here they come—now hidden, now re-appearing between the deep-wooded windings of the mountain side; one can hear their jangling bells at a mile's distance. An endless file of raw-boned sinewy beasts, each with its crimson tassel, or glittering brass star, or some other gewgaw charm against the evil eye, at its collar, and a couple of more or less evenly-balanced packages, secured by a more complicated tackle of rope than ever my Homeric prototype tied round his sea-chest, dangling at its sides; all crowding, pushing, jostling, stumbling along the rock steps of the narrow pathway; not unfrequently, too, hustling each other right off the edge to a fall of many hundred feet into the ravine below, where, with a crash or two on the stones, the wicked—*i.e.*, the muleteer in quadrupedal opinion at least—cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest—that is, so far as the mule's future is concerned; unless some lucky shrub intervenes to stay the over-rapid descent. Alongside, behind them, trudge on foot the grey-coated, sheep-skin-capped, heavy-limbed, heavy-featured, pale-eyed Turcoman drivers, who with thong and cry have brought their charges from the great plains across the Persian frontier. Or it is a string of huge woolly camels, most powerful and ungainliest of their kind, swaying along beneath their loads as they thrust out their shaggy snaky necks in an aimless fashion from side to side, and frightening our nags into a desperate scramble to get out of the way up the mountain slope; for the secular terror of the horse at sight or even at smell of the camel is not in the least diminished since the days of Herodotus; though how it originated, or why it is kept up, seeing that the camel on his side manifests no disposition except that of the most absolute indifference towards the horse, is a problem which might tax the ingenuity of a Darwin himself to solve. Grazing and loitering as it goes, accomplishing barely twelve or fourteen miles a day, and taking a month to get over ground which, with decent roads and proper

conveyances, might easily be traversed, and at one-fourth of the cost too, in a week, the caravan, like the Ten Thousand of old, salutes the sea at Trebizond. There, hard by the appropriate resting-place of "Giaour Meidan," or "Unbelievers' Square," a large open space at the entry of the town, in the Perso-European or "unbelieving" quarter—for in Turkish opinion a Persian's creed is hardly more orthodox than a Christian's, if at all—it deposits the products of Central Asia; and then, laden in exchange with European merchandise, winds slowly back, to whence it came from, Persia.

But whoever would witness at Trebizond this not uninteresting spectacle, not less characteristic of the Ottoman East than the stage coach and the lumbering van once were of England, must hasten his visit to these shores, whence caravans and caravan-drivers are fast passing away. Not, however, owing to any more expeditious substitute introduced by the Osmanlee, who, content with levying excessive transit-dues, and harassing merchants and muleteers alike by custom-house vexations and frontier annoyances, leaves the rest to circumstance and chance; but by the competitive energy of the Russians, masters of the long-disused but rival Caucasian route. Caravans are soon distanced by steam-engines; and the railroad that has this very year connected Tiflis with the Black Sea coast, and promises soon to reach the frontiers of Persia itself, has already appropriated to itself more than half the traffic that formerly cumbered the "Unbelievers' Square," or crammed the massive warehouses—the largest of which is Byzantine in construction and date—of Trebizond.

However, the seriousness of the impending loss—for Trebizond, in spite of its almost pre-historical memories and high-sounding name, would, if deprived of its intercourse with Persia, soon sink into a mere coast village, remarkable for nothing but its ruined Comnenian castle—roused at last even Ottoman apathy into something of an effort. A real road, a carriage road, from Trebizond to Persia, was resolved on, was begun, and even, after a fashion, was completed.

Now, so it is that Turks—modern Turks, I mean—very slow

hands at commencing any work, public or private, of real utility, are slower still at finishing it; while as to keeping it up, or repairing it, that is what they never think of at all. From a mosque to a sentry-box, from a palace to a policeman's jacket, so soon as the object—no matter how costly at first or how necessary—has once begun to go to wrack, it may follow on in the same direction as long as it pleases, even to the "bitter end." A new article of the same sort may perhaps, regardless of expense, be provided; but as to the old one, not a brick will be replaced, not a tile re-arranged, not a board nailed up, not a stitch bestowed in time or out of it. Were I general family tutor, or governess, or something of the kind to the "young idea" of the Turkish generation, "For want of a nail," with the rest of that rhythmical nursery wisdom, should be the Alpha and the Omega of my daily lessons. Unfortunately, the lesson, so far as the Osmanlee is concerned, is still to learn; and experience, say what the wise ones may, is for human beings in general, not for Stuarts or Bourbons alone, the least effective of teachers.

Let us judge for ourselves. So we leave behind the brown Byzantine walls of volcanic stone, tower and battlement, and the card-paper lath-and-plaster houses clustered beneath their shadow, among black cypress-spears, and glistening orchard foliage—in a word, Trebizond generally, ancient and modern, lazily basking in the hot mid-day July sun; and winding our way past the harbour cliffs, enter on the broad Pyxites valley, the Persian winter route, which it is our programme to follow for some distance. And behold, our horses canter side by side with tolerable ease and freedom along a macadamised road. But, alas! not for long. This fair portion of the highway, which is only five or six miles in length, is that completed some years since by some French engineers, who, after laying down the general line of route, and getting through with the more serious difficulties of the work, were rather unceremoniously dismissed to make room for a fat Osmanlee head-engineer with a Turkish staff. Forced labour—that curse of the East—was now brought into play; and after the road had been patched up in an incom-

plete fashion, it was pronounced finished, and has since then been left to take care of itself, amid the rains, storms, snows, and other vagaries of the Pontic climate.

It is now, of course, in full progress through the three phases common to everything at the mercy of Osmanlee administration —slovenliness, dilapidation, and, lastly, disappearance. The macadam is broken up into pits and hollows that would upset a Devonshire cart; the side-cuttings slip down in huge shell-like masses which already encroach on half the breadth of the way, and threaten soon to bury it altogether; embankments, in obedience to the laws of gravity, are fast enticing the entire road to join them company at the bottom of the ravines below; watercourses, disdaining restraint, wander fancy-free over the path, and furnish the unexpected variety of quagmires in the driest weather; in short, I fear that for the few miles that we availed ourselves of this master-specimen of Ottoman industry, it hardly conveyed either to the hoofs of the horses, or the minds of their riders, those impressions of unqualified admiration with which the constructors themselves regard the result of their engineering skill.

"Have you any such roads in Europe?" enquires of me, in a tone of conscious triumph, a red-capped, black-coated, shirt-collarless official, who has ridden thus far, *honoris causâ*, at my side. With becoming gravity I reply, that for Europe in general I could not adequately answer, but that in England, to the best of my recollections, we certainly had not.

Such, however, as the road is, our, or rather our horses', enjoyment of it is brief; for our route soon ceases to coincide with its direction, and strikes off by a narrow transverse horse-track, that is generally adopted by summer travellers; for in winter the Khazeklee Pass, as it is called, 8,600 feet above the sea, and up which we have to scramble, is a hopeless waste of deep snow. So turning up a wild wooded gorge we begin the ascent; and from henceforth till we reach the town of Beyboort, in what was once Armenia, after a ride of about eighty miles across the entire mountain tract intervening between the Black Sea and the central highlands of Anatolia, we bid farewell, not

to Osmanlee public works only, but also to almost every trace of Osmanlee rule and nationality whatever.

"Government extends as far as the town gates," says an Arab proverb, relative to Turkish rule in Syria; and no one who has dwelt some time in that country can have failed to remark that, once beyond city limits, impoverishment and ruin are in fact almost the only indications that the Osmanlee is lord of the land. It is the same here, with this difference only, that instead of being Arab, the population, customs, buildings, all things, whether of the present or the past, are in the main Greek.

Not "Greek" in the "Hellene" sense of the word, for, search as I might, I could discover no facts to warrant the pleasing belief entertained by some, that genuine unchanged relics of the classic colonies once planted along these shores may still be found here, guarded from foreign admixture by the triple defence of precipitous mountain, dense forest, and stormy sea. Such vestiges may indeed possibly have lingered long, but they have now entirely disappeared under two thousand years of climatic influence, intermarriage, and the many wars and changes that have passed over the region. The "Greek" here does not bear the title of "Hellenos," but "Room," *i.e.* Byzantine; and it is to Byzantine colonization, settled here during the first ages of the empire, and afterwards largely reinforced by the immigrants who fled from the barbarism of the Latin captors of Constantinople to the refuge offered by the Comnenian sceptre, that the inhabitants of these mountains, whether Christian or Mahometan, alike owe their language and their descent.

From the sea-shore up to a height of about five thousand feet, these Greek, or Byzantine, villages are tolerably numerous, and have all much the same character. We clamber up by what would elsewhere be called a mere goat track, but here is dignified by the title of a road, amid the incomparably lovely scenery of these mountain sides, beneath the green lights and green shades of beech, alder, walnut, maple, chestnut, and ash overhead, by fantastic jutting masses of volcanic rock; while deep below the foaming torrent of the Aschyros, or the Kalopotamos, or the Saleros,—for to each and all of these, and of their kindred

streams,—Turkish domination continued during four centuries has not yet given a single Turkish name,—rushes and raves with ceaseless roar through the black gorge; then suddenly we emerge on patches of luxuriant maize and hemp, clinging at what one might have thought an impossible angle to the mountain side; then the ledge broadens out somewhat, and we find ourselves at the little Greek-named village Stauros, or Aghalos, or the like, where we intend to draw bridle for a noonday halt. Along the wayside are half-a-dozen open shops, where muleteers' gear, straps, nosebags, saddlebags, and similar articles, all of the gayest colours and the clumsiest forms, along with horse-shoes—if the rough iron plates with a small hole in the middle that are here fastened on the hoof deserve the name—coarse tobacco, cigarette paper, sour apples—all fruit here is eaten sour—a few dirty eggs, soapy-looking clots of cheese, and so forth, are set forth to purchase. Not far off is a little building: if it happens to be oblong in form and points eastward, you recognise it for a church; if square, and with its entrance to the north, it is a mosque—in either case it is totally devoid of outside ornament, except the invariable whitewash of the country. As to the peasants' houses, wooden frameworks filled up with rubble, scattered as at random up and down the slopes, each in its own field, with its own little gourd-growing garden, suggesting the idea—a not improbable one, in fact—that everybody has quarrelled with his neighbour, and wishes to live as far away from him as possible; the inmates may be indifferently Christian or Mahometan for anything that the external architecture declares. Poverty is a great leveller of creeds as of everything else; and a separate harem accommodation supposes an amount of wealth and ease which is far from being realised by any Pontic peasant of our day. Besides, the whole of the house-work, and a good half of the field-work too, is performed by the women; a state of things which naturally renders impossible that absolute seclusion—or, one might more justly say, elimination—of the fair sex in which the town-living Mahometan delights.

Nor does the unwelcome fact that every female form in view,

after stopping an instant to get a preliminary peep at the travellers, draws her blue wrapper close over her lovely face, and even with discourteous shyness turns her broad back upon you, do much to decide in what religion the hamlet delights; for, in the semi-barbarism of Anatolia, Greek and Armenian ladies hardly enjoy wider freedom of seeing and being seen than Mahometan. But in the present instance I remark that every male head is invested with a turban, or with something that does duty for one, from the yellow flowered rag, bound wisplike round the cap of the lad who holds my horse as I dismount, to the more voluminous white foldings that give a sort of dignity to the hard, weather-worn faces of the elders of the village, who have come up to welcome and to stare at the new arrival. Hence I know them to be Mahometans, for the Christian head, if adorned by anything in addition to the universal red skull-cap of the East, would have a dark-coloured handkerchief tied round it; nor would its fold imitate the distinctive turban, but rather resemble that adopted by an invalid suffering from facial neuralgia. Another indication of the Mahometan is the generally clipped and shorn look; the hair cut close, the beard and moustachios trimmed—this was a special recommendation of the Prophet's—while the Christian peasant revels in a profusion of lank, depending hair, and side-locks that might do honour to a Lithuanian Jew; and his beard, if not shaved about a fortnight ago—I have never had the good luck of meeting one whose toilet day could have been much within that period—is, like his moustachios, left to the irregular luxuriance of nature. Not only in person, too, but in clothes, the Mahometan is generally the cleaner of the two. What, however, most distinguishes him from his Christian fellow-peasant is his hospitality.

Two classes are in general eminently hospitable throughout the East: one, the old-established—not the modern—Levantine, the other, the Mahometan. Of the former I have not here room to speak; their proper *habitat* is not within my present beat, nor, indeed—the Ægean coast excepted—in any part of Asia Minor. But the Mahometan, whatever his nationality, is in this respect much the same everywhere; it is a part of the

primal Arab tradition of his code; and even extreme poverty and a far-distant latitude do not render the peasants of Pontus an exception to the rule. Hence I should strongly advise travellers in Anatolia to avail themselves of the creature comforts which Mahometan lodgings provide, rather than of the religious sympathies, if such there be, which make up the staple of Greek or Armenian hospitality. In other respects there is little difference. Whatever its creed, each village manages its own affairs, chooses, by an irregular sort of election, its own "Mukhtar," or headman; repairs or neglects its own paths and watercourses, builds or decorates its own church or mosque, supports its own Imam, or priest, as the case may be, and sometimes manages to keep up a kind of primary school, in which reading and writing are sufficiently taught to be, in nineteen cases out of twenty, wholly forgotten as life goes on. With Government they rarely have anything to do, except when reminded of its existence by a visit from the tax-collector, or a summons to supply forced and unpaid labour for some object in which they have about as much interest as the inhabitants of Japan. On these occasions the headman is considered a responsible party, and is often made the scapegoat for the shortcomings of the community; for everything else he is left to exercise over his neighbours an authority of which the more or the less is chiefly determined by his own personal aptness for the position which he holds.

Greek is the language spoken by all, exclusively indeed by some, though in the Mahometan day schools, where they exist, a little Turkish is sometimes taught; and those among the men who more frequently go down to the coast for the sale of their village produce, and the like, pick up the latter idiom. The women, more stay-at-home than the men, know only Greek; but such as Pericles or Xenophon himself, though he did once visit these mountains, would have considerable difficulty in understanding, so mixed is it with Sclavonian and other dialects, including, I suspect, the aboriginal Pontic. Still the groundwork is Greek—*ποταμός* is a river, *γάλα*, milk, *κρέας*, meat, *φῶς*, fire, and so on. The features of both sexes too, in spite

of a certain serious and independent air which Mahometanism appears generally to confer on its followers, are distinctly Byzantine: long, sallow, high-nosed faces, with hair and eyes mostly of a dark brown, occasionally lighter, and even auburn; the mouth is usually well shaped, the expression by no means unintelligent, but often cunning, even sinister. Their stature is middling, their limbs slender, but active and strong.

Here and there, however, especially among the Mahometans, a different type crops up, tall, well built, with light grey eyes, auburn hair, and a certain clearness of complexion alien from the muddy skins of Byzantine Greek, Turkish, Turcoman, or Armenian heritage, fairer, too, than the Kurde, or any of the southern races. I am inclined to think that the individuals of this description represent the aboriginal Pontic stock, which seems to have been akin to the neighbouring Caucasian families —Georgian, Mingrelian, Abaze, and the rest. Lastly, the relics of the old autocratic "Dereh-Begs," or hereditary landowners, still linger here, but shorn of their semi-feudal power and state. Their title and parentage derive in most instances from some Janissary or "Sipahi" of the sixteenth or seventeenth century: Greek, Albanian, Servian, Croat. Who can now tell which of the "tribute children," or who of the many renegades of those times, was their father? These Japhets are not much in the habit of searching after theirs.

But the "trail of the serpent," the Byzantine character, is over all; and it remains unfortunately much the same as it appears to have been in the days of the Comneni and Palæologi; it has not perhaps deteriorated; indeed of that there was hardly a possibility, but it certainly has not improved. Perhaps, under the circumstances, that was not much to be expected. Certainly as we now know them, they are versatile rather than clever, cunning rather than intelligent, and quarrelsome rather than brave. Each village has at least one feud on hand; the ordinary cause being either "lovely woman," or the disputed limits of some pasture range in the grazing grounds that extend upward from the forest belt almost to the summit of the granite mountain crest. These feuds are often bloody; but there is

little fair fighting. A long shot from the shelter of a boulder, or a hatchet-cut from behind in a narrow path, exemplify the ordinary procedures. Sometimes a field of standing harvest is hacked and wasted in the night, or ricks and cowsheds burned, or a well choked up—all cowardly doings, that have a strong flavour of the lower Greek empire, or the Irish Home-Ruler, in them. Domestic virtue, too, is at a low ebb. The hamlet of these regions is in this respect scarcely better off than the town.

Of religions, at least præter-human belief, the indications are many. The "Greeks" perch a little cell-like chapel on the top of every hill, with most uncouth saints of genuine Byzantine stiffness daubed on its walls, and at its farther end a rough altar stone, black with oil from the lamp beside it, where mass is said once or twice a year. Their Mahometan brethren, not to be behindhand with them, hang up some equivocal relic—a hair of the Prophet's beard, it may be, or a rag which has touched some like holy thing—alongside of the prayer-niche of the mosque, and cover the wall with unartistic drawings, highly coloured, of the Meccan Kaabah or other shrines. In narrowness of mind there is little to choose between them: the monks of the many mountain convents hereabouts, and the "Mollas" and "Imams" of the neighbourhood, enjoy an equal reputation in this respect. But, besides what may be considered as the special property of either symbol, the Crescent and the Cross have here many observances in common. Among these the means taken to avert the influence of the evil eye are frequent and curious enough. I had often noticed in the fields a tall pole, with a wicker circle balanced atop, the circumference being hung round with bones, feathers, and gaudy rags. At first I supposed it to be a scarecrow against the innumerable birds of the country, but was informed that it was there for the more practical purpose of guarding against the evil eye. An ox's or buffalo's skull is yet more generally employed; and the withered chaplets suspended from the horns remind one of a favourite ornament of the usual Greek metope, with which this very ancient fancy may perhaps be indirectly connected.

Or it is a little dome-like construction, roughly put together

and often in ruins, which bears the name of some legendary half-hero, half-saint, claimed alike by Islam and Christianity, and visited by turbaned and unturbaned pilgrims on the same anniversary. If a bush happen to be near at hand, it is sure to be decorated all over with little rags knotted on to the twigs. Each rag mystically contains some evil, from which the person who tied it desires to be freed by this act and by the intercession of the saint. To untie it would be the extreme of rashness, as it would infallibly bring the unloosened evil on the intruder's head. Even touching it might, I am informed, have the same effect.

These sanctuaries are almost invariably situated either near some spring-head, particularly should it be a mineral one, or on the top of an isolated height. The idea which placed them there is probably in many instances much older than that embodied in any creed now professed in the land. One such building, conspicuous on a conical peak nearly three thousand feet above the sea, and dedicated to the mythical Elias of the East, attracted my special notice; and after a climb which led me to admire rather than to envy the devout up-hill labours of the yearly pilgrims, I reached the summit—a weather-beaten pinnacle of black volcanic rock. There by the side of a ruined Byzantine chapel, open to the sky, I found something of much greater interest; namely, the distinct remains of a small pagan shrine, not that of Hellenic, but seemingly of much more ancient date: the lower part made up of four basement walls, inclosing a square of about twelve feet each way, was cut out of the rock itself to a height of nearly five feet. This had been originally raised further by rows of huge oblong blocks, each several feet in length. On two sides they still retained their places; on the other two they, like the roof, if there ever was one, had disappeared. In the southern wall—for the building faced the compass—was a small square peep-hole of a window cut in the rock. The whole reminded me nearly of some idol shrines I have seen in the Tamil villages of Southern India. Besides this, hewn out in the foundation rock of the temple, on its southerly aspect, I found two small sepulchral caves, containing

each a recess for a single corpse. In either niche the place for the head and the feet were indicated by corresponding depressions in the hollowed stone itself; the length was in each much the same, a little under six feet. The heads of the corpses must have lain to the west, their feet to the east, and their right sides to the south. The face of the cliff bore traces too of other tombs, but now almost shapeless from the crumbling of the tuff beneath the storms and winters of more than two thousand years.

Not far from Trebizond is another of these sepulchral caves. I visited it, and found it about eleven feet from the floor to the highest part of the vault-like roof, and sixteen feet broad by twelve deep, thus much resembling in form a huge oven; the rock here too was volcanic tuff, and still bore marks of the chisel. At the further end, and on either side, were deep coffin-like recesses for the dead, who must here, as in the tombs described above, have been laid recumbent at full length, but in different directions. The wide entrance of the cave had originally been closed by a door, as appeared by the holes for the door-gonds bored in the rock above and below; and in the inner right-hand wall was a small niche, apparently for a lamp. The cavern had at a later period been converted into a Greek chapel, and vestiges of uncouth Byzantine daubings still appeared on the walls. But at present it is visited by Mahometans and Christians alike, under the ambiguous title of the prophet Elias.

There are countless caves of this sort along the coast slope of the mountain range, but I have never found any far inland, except at Amasia and Kastemouni. This last belongs to Paphlagonia, however, not to Pontus, and is situated some way up the valley of the Halys, or Kizil-Irmak, as it is now called. But in that region the rock monuments bear traces of much greater skill and workmanship than appears to have been bestowed on the rough-hewn memorials about Trebizond. In no case, however, have I been able to discover either inscription or date.

The other "breakages" of this district are either Byzantine

or purely local. To the former class belong the numerous bridges, of coarse but very massive construction, which once spanned and now half choke with their ruins the many torrent rivers. The traveller hereabouts in winter and spring finds good reason to regret their loss. Byzantine, too, are the picturesque relics of battlemented walls and towers "bosomed high" in the madly-luxuriant vegetation of the coast, which give some of the small towns hereabouts a diminutive resemblance to old Constantinople. One town in particular, Rizeh—the Rhizœum of Strabo, and where, by the way, almost all the inhabitants are Greek-speaking Mahometans, and are simply the most disagreeable, quarrelsome, bigoted, narrow-minded set I have ever had to deal with—still retains about half of a mural circuit, which, when complete, cannot have been much under two miles in extent. The towers are about forty feet high, round, and placed at close intervals along the wall: one only has its upper part shaped into a not ungraceful octagon. The thickness of the walls is everywhere enormous; the materials rough-hewn, or mere irregular stones, copiously cemented with indifferent plaster. A couple of small vaulted chapels, each with its three lancet windows looking east—a favourite Nicene symbol—would alone suffice to determine the architects, were they not otherwise clearly indicated by the style of the fortifications themselves. As I clambered about them I might almost have fancied myself at Constantinople, near the Seven Towers. But here, too, was neither inscription or date, though architectural comparison would seem to indicate the eighth or ninth century as the epoch of building.

Lastly, to the same class belong the numerous monasteries and nunneries of the land, some of them growing out like excrescences at the mouth of an old Pontic cave, now modified into a chapel. There are five large ones, all Greek, within a thirty miles' radius from Trebizond, and smaller ones are scattered elsewhere; but they would require a separate description to themselves.

The latter, or local, class of ruins includes those from the sixteenth to the close of the eighteenth century. To this period

belong the numerous paved horse-ways, solidly constructed, and extending in a complicated network for scores and scores of miles up valleys, across mountains, through forests, from the sea-shore to the upper range. They were the work of the much-maligned Dereh-Begs, the landed proprietors swept away by the pseudo-reforms of Sultan Mahmood and Abd-el-Mejeed; and were kept in order by village labour, freely given, because profitable. In the present poverty of the country, these roads are left unrepaired and untended, till many are now absolutely impassable; nor are new ones ever provided, or old ones mended by a Government which has taken to itself the resources, but omitted the responsibilities of the land it governs. So too the many road-side fountains, each with its pretty little ogee arch, and arabesque inscription commemorating the munificence of the builder, some wealthy villager or Beg; these, too, are now abandoned, choked, and fallen into ruin. So also the dreary walls, and long ranges of windows open to the sky, that once were the abodes of the "Begs" or "Aghas," semi-feudal landlords, turbulent enough in their day, but good masters, hospitable, and spending in the land itself what they took from it; not, like the modern Stamboolee leeches, disgorging elsewhere the life-blood they have sucked from the province.

That the epochs, Pontic, Roman, Byzantine, and, so to speak, self-governing, were one and all "better times" than the present, the relics I have described or alluded to, with many other indications of bygone populousness and prosperity, seem sufficiently to establish; and the peasants with one voice declare that their condition was much more favourable, not only in the centuries preceding the Turkish conquest, of which they have long since lost every memory, but even after that event, under the almost independent rule of their own land-owners and headmen, when the Osmanlee Government was hardly more to them than a distant and respected name; not, as now, a daily and burdensome interference. Certainly a serious diminution in the number of the inhabitants is attested by the frequency of shrunk or deserted villages; and the dimi-

nution of life indicates a corresponding diminution in the means of life.

The inhabitants are, with hardly an exception, wretchedly poor. The plot of ground on which each man cultivates his maize, hemp, and garden stuff, yields little more than enough for his own personal uses and those of his family; the maize-field and garden supply their staple food, and the hemp their clothing: this last coarse and ragged beyond belief. And no wonder, where a single suit has to do duty alike for summer and winter, day and night. Whatever truth there may be in the philosophical "man wants but little here below"—an assertion I hold more than questionable for man, and utterly false for woman—he certainly gets uncommonly little in this region. For anything like gain, he has to depend on a scanty allowance of eggs furnished by a few diminutive hens, or the butter derived from a meagre cow or two; perhaps a few basketsful of orchard fruit; or, the best resource, a dozen loads of charcoal, which he has prepared in the forest. These he takes down on a donkey, or not rarely on his own or his wife's back, to the nearest market-town, say Trebizond, and there sells for what they may fetch. But here the Government, which never provided him directly or indirectly with a path to go by, or a plank to cross a torrent, which affords him no security against violence, no education in youth, no assistance or refuge in difficulty, sickness, or old age, is beforehand with him; and under title of road-dues, town-dues, market-dues, etc., secures from five to ten per cent. of whatever profit his wares may realise. Out of the remainder he has to pay agricultural tithes, property-tax—a very heavy one—sheep or cattle-tax, and yearly recurring requisitions for nominal public works, seldom executed, and, if executed, of no good to him, and very little to any one else. What is left goes to buy whatever household articles or agricultural implements the produce of his own ground cannot furnish. As to the maize, it is so unremunerative a crop, and the quantity which each individual peasant can obtain, owing to the infinitesimal subdivision of property, so small that it is practically of no account for gain. When to all

this we add frequent requisitions of unpaid labour, military service, and the like, can we wonder that the Pontic peasant lives, or rather starves, in debt, dies in debt, and leaves debt and starvation as the only heritage to his children?

The fact is that the Osmanlee Government never considers, or wishes to consider, that it has any duty towards those it governs, except that of getting as much money as possible out of them. Moreover, the quantity of what it squeezes, or tries to squeeze, out of any given district is proportioned, not on the means and wealth of those squeezed, but on their moral or physical compressibility and yieldingness. Hence, as a rule, Christian populations, which have, so to speak, a court of appeal in European opinion, not to mention European representatives, Consular Courts, and the like, are much less hard pressed now-a-days than Mahometan; while the heaviest burden of all, the conscription, falls wholly on the latter, and equals in theory about one-fifth, in practice fortunately not more than one-eighth or so, of the adult male census. It is true that the Christians pay in money for their exemption from this "blood-tax;" but they have, on the whole, a cheap bargain.

Unhappily, the spirit of servile, unconditional obedience, which from an early date characterised the subjects of the Byzantine Empire, has rested in a double portion on their descendants. "We are born to be fleeced, and fleeced we will be, and take it quietly," is their view of the matter. This spirit of miscalled loyalty, and real slavishness, is strongest among the Mahometan population, whom the adoption of Islam has, thus far at least, not benefited but injured. Man must have an idol of some kind—figure, picture, book, or idea—to bow down to and worship; and as figures and pictures are forbidden to the Muslim, while of the book, the Koran, the idol of his Arab brethren, he, for ignorance of its language, cannot make much, the once Byzantine Mahometan has set up for his idol the idea of Islam, and worships it with a devotion which the "Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him" of Job could scarcely parallel. But Islam is, moreover, in his mind identified with what is for him its visible and chiefest avatar, the Empire of the

house of Othman, the waning crescent of the crimson flag. And thus, in spite of the new and hated regulations of latter-day Sultans, of Janissaries butchered, grants revoked, institutions destroyed, and burdens bound on by a bureaucracy the little finger of which is thicker than the loins of a Suleyman or a Murad; in spite of the still deeper and more searching change that has come over the spirit of the Ottoman dream, transforming the terror of the nations into a feeble parody of that most portentous of all failures, the Second French Empire—the Mahometan of Anatolia continues, passively at least, true to his old love, invests it with the inviolability of the creed he worships; and while acknowledging it in detail to be an ogre, reveres it in the whole as a God.

Still, the field of patience has not only extent but limits; and from time to time even the Mahometan "Koïlee," or "Fellah," or peasant of Pontus is fairly driven beyond them. He then takes to the mountains: and as law, in the only sense he knows it, has been his enemy, he becomes in his turn an enemy to law. Band after band of such half fugitives, half outlaws, has sprung up within the last few years among these forests; and did a provincial newspaper exist, its "sensation" columns would seldom need a topic. To-day it is a house broken into, and one or more of the inmates mangled by a hatchet; to-morrow some corn-stacks burnt, or the standing crops wantonly cut, trampled down, and destroyed in the dark; or a wayfarer has been found robbed and murdered, or a woman brutally ravished, or what not! It would be a painful, often a revolting, task to chronicle the crimes committed in these lovely glens.

And the Government?

Well, the Government, so long as individuals only, especially if they chance to be of the poorer sort, are concerned, does simply nothing. But at last some person of consequence has, perhaps, been the sufferer; or a whole village or district has been injured; and a formal complaint and demand of redress, backed, of course, by a pre-payment of costs and good-will, not less necessary in a criminal than in a civil case before an Osmanlee tribunal, has been lodged at the official residence, where money

received may have created a reasonable hope that more may be obtained from the same sources. A party of armed police, or, in extreme instances, of soldiers, are then sent at once to investigate and to punish; on whose approach, announced several days beforehand, the real criminals prudently make off. In their place, however, a few ready-to-hand persons are easily apprehended, and triumphantly carried off to be shut up in a jail, the like of which Mrs. Fry's worst nightmare never imaged, there to remain two, three, or more months, even years, their guilt or innocence being never examined into, till either death, or the presents thrown by their friends into the insatiate jaws of authority, procures them release. I have known as many as eighty thus dragged off to prison in a batch: by the end of four months several of them were dead and others like to die of jail-fever; and during all that time not a single man or lad of the number had been brought before any kind of tribunal whatever, whether for investigation or trial. Meanwhile, God help their families. These were one and all Mahometans, from a once Byzantine village about fifty miles distant from Trebizond.

Others again—and their number is large, much larger than the Osmanlee Government suspects—quit the country; some for the Russian Caucasus or Georgia, some for Constantinople, some for the larger towns of Syria or Egypt, there to pick up what living they may. Few of them ever return. The emigration is secret, for a reason little known, I believe, beyond the limits of the Ottoman Empire, but which ought to be taken into account in forming an estimate of the vaunted "progress" of its rulers. The Turkish peasant is—on a principle which, so far as I can discover, dates its origin from the semi-feudal times of military tenure, but which has assumed its actual and much more galling form in the present century—considered as serf of the soil he tills, or *ascriptus glebæ* in old phrase: and this principle is at once exemplified and enforced by a regulation forbidding him to quit his native village and district, except for a stated time, and then only after procuring an official "pass," for which a high fee has to be paid. The place too whither he intends going must be specified in the "pass;" and on any

change of destination, a fresh one must be taken. For a "pass" to quit the country altogether, or for life, it would be vain to ask, as it would certainly be refused. Indeed, the bare appearance of a peasant at the "pass" office, asking for leave to emigrate to Russia, would be enough to make the clerk faint from the very impudence of the demand. But where a reasonable and advantageous thing is refused by authority, it is tolerably sure to be taken without authority; and every year the underhand emigration draws off large and still larger numbers from this region.

Much more, however, is this the case with the "Greek" peasants; that is, with those who, in addition to their Byzantine descent, have maintained after a fashion the Byzantine religion and social system. Sheltered under the protection liberally afforded by the Russian consulates, they emigrate, not by individuals, or even families, but by whole bands. I have known as many as a hundred Pontic "Greeks" at a time, after receiving in the morning a flat refusal of the "passes" requested from the Ottoman authorities, together with a threat that if they did not at once abandon their migratory intentions and return to their mountain villages, they should be packed off not to Russia, but to prison, embark comfortably the same evening after dark on board the Russian steamer lying at their service in the harbour, and transfer themselves and theirs to the Muscovite allegiance. By a curious coincidence, the Turkish Pasha, or Governor-General of the town and district, was dining that evening in full state at the Russian Consulate, whence he did not return to his own official residence till the "small hours," long after the sailing of the emigrant-laden boat. It would be hard to blame either the emigrants or those who helped them. It might be harder to defend those who maintain the *status quo* of Osmanlee rule.

Ruins of nations, ruins of empires, uncemented fragments, built up into an empire itself already a crumbling ruin. Yet the land is still the same as when the Argonauts first gazed on it from the sea, and the Ten Thousand from the over-topping mountains; the same snow-flecked heights, green pastures,

luxuriant forests, full torrents, fertile soil; the very yellow blaze of wild flowers whence the bees in Xenophon's time drew their intoxicating honey, unchanged to this day, is still the same;—it is the old sad story of the East—

"Art, glory, freedom fail; but Nature still is fair."

But if better days be yet in store for Pontus, they certainly will not dawn till the last rays of the Crescent have set from the verge of her western origin, the seven hills of Stambool.

Meanwhile we have emerged from the forest-gorge, left beneath us the wavelike billows of rolling mist, traversed the wide pasture slopes, crossed the bare jagged crest, whence from a height of nearly nine thousand feet we have given a last backward look at the far-off dream-like stretch of bay, headland, and sea; and have now by long windings descended into the great inland valley of the Chorok, the Harpasus of Xenophon, where, with the limits of Anatolian Gurgistan, begins another region and a different and better race.

THE MONASTERY OF SUMELAS.

Published in 'Fraser's Magazine' for February 1871, the Essay now revised in some not unimportant respects was written during the preceding year, immediately after my return from Sumelas itself. Since then I have visited many monastic sanctuaries, some of them Greek Orthodox, some Roman Catholic, in Europe as in Asia: in all the essential or family resemblance is strongly marked; the differences of detail, arising from locality, dogma, or observance, merely superficial. All alike have, though not all in precisely the same degree, the one great merit of witnessing to earth's plebeians, the mob of science, business, commerce, progress, and pleasure, the truth uttered, though in a somewhat different sense, by Shakespeare's typical nobleman, him of Corioli,

"There is a world elsewhere."

"In concluding the history of this Greek State, we enquire in vain for any benefit that it conferred on the human race," says Finlay, as he winds up the crime-stained scroll of the later Byzantine empire, or, rather, Principality of Trebizond. A severer sentence could hardly have been passed; yet few perhaps have been ever more thoroughly borne out by facts and memorials, in annal or in monument. Originated, to borrow the same able historian's phrase once more, in accident, continued in meanness, and extinguished in dishonour, the Comnenian dynasty has left on the Pontic coast but little abiding record, and that little unmistakably stamped with the leading characteristics of the empire itself. The straggling, loose-built walls of the ill-constructed citadel of Trebizond; the dwarfish proportions and tasteless ornamentation of the over-vaunted church of St. Sophia by the sea-shore, the still feebler architecture of the churches of St. Eugenius, St. John, and others, now doing duty as mosques in different quarters of the town, belong to and attest the type of those who reared them;

and their defects are rendered only the more glaring by their servile attempt to copy the great though over-ponderous models of earlier Byzantine date. If this be true, as, begging the German Fallmereyer's pardon, true it is, of the quondam capital, what can we expect in the less important and outlying points of the ephemeral empire, where the littleness of art is still more disadvantageously contrasted with the gigantic proportions of nature?

Yet even here, among these relics of a debased age, we occasionally come across some grand constructional outline indicative of others than the Comnenes; of nobler races, or at least of superior organisation. Such are the Cyclopean fragments at Kerasunt or Cherasond, the broken columns of Kyrelee on the eastern coast, and the solid though shattered walls of "Eski-Trabezoon," or "Old Trebizond," situated some sixty miles east of the present town. In the same class may rank the rock-built monasteries scattered throughout the mountains that line the coast; and which, though bearing the traces of later modification and, too often, defacement, are yet not wholly unworthy relics of the days when Chrysostom preached and Pulcheria reigned. And of these is the monastery of the Virgin, the Panagia or Immaculate of Sumelas.

High-perched among the upper ranges of the Kolat mountain chain, south-east of Trebizond, from which it is distant about thirty miles inland, Sumelas is the pilgrim-bourne of innumerable "Greeks," (to use a customary misnomer for the mixed population of Byzantine, Slavonian, and Lazic origin that here professes the "orthodox" faith,) who flock to the shrine of the Panagia on the yearly recurrence of Her great festival day, the 27th of August in our calendar, the 15th in theirs. At other seasons Her visitors are comparatively few: indeed, snow, rain and mist render the convent almost inaccessible for full eight months out of the twelve; nor can the road be called easy travelling at any time. Hence the convent, in spite of its widespread nor undeserved reputation, is visited by Europeans seldom, by the inert and careless Europeo-Levantines hardly ever. For myself, however, Ovid's fellow-convict in my Pontine

Sydney, a trip to Sumelas, so managed as to coincide with one of the rare intervals of clear weather on this murky coast, and yet to avoid the crowd and other inconveniences of the festival epoch, was too desirable a break in the sameness of Turko-Levantine life not to be undertaken; and a fine week towards the beginning of August at last afforded the wished-for opportunity.

So in the early dawn, while the waning moon yet glittered above the morning star in the calm slaty sky, we started, a band of five horsemen in all, two negro servants included, bound for the celebrated "Mariamana," as the convent is here popularly called; and rode out of Trebizond with the huge bare mass of Boz-Tepeh, or the "Brown Hill," once Mount Mithrios, on our right, and the black and brackish Euxine pool entitled by geographical courtesy a sea, on our left. We followed the new road, that, when Turkish engineers shall have learnt the first rudiments of their art, which will not be till they have ceased to be Turkish engineers, is to render the route between Trebizond and Erzeroom amenable to wheeled carriages instead of the classic caravans that now, as for centuries bygone, alone thread the long mountain pass. For at present the roughest waggon that ever lumbered along a Devonshire lane could not venture on four miles of the Erzeroom track without the unpleasant certainty of being either upset or jolted to shivers on the way. To us, however, on the present occasion this matters little, for Turkish horses are sure-footed as Spanish mules; so on we ride; and after rounding the great corner cliff that, jutting right out on the water's edge, retains the classic-sounding name of Eleusa, we enter on the sandy delta of the Pixytes river, now degraded into the "Deyermend-Déréh," or "Mill-course" of Turkish nomenclature. Its valley, penetrating south-east far into the mountains, has at all times served as directing line to the great commercial track that, bending eastwards to Erzeroom, brings Koordistan and Persia into communication with the basin of the Black Sea and Constantinople. Up this valley we now turn, and soon cross a huge barrier-ridge of rolled stones, the joint work of sea and river in

glacial times, when the now shrunken torrent was full fed by vast tracts of snow and ice in its parent mountains. And here I may add parenthetically that over all the highland of inner Anatolia, from the Lazistan coast range up to the watershed of the Euphrates, I have met with numerous traces of the cold Post-Pliocene epoch, well known to geologists, such as furrowed rocks, erratic boulders, rounded prominences, and huge moraines, stretching far down into the plains from the mountain summits that even now, though long since bared of their icy caps by a milder climate, maintain patches of snow all the year through.

Next we thread a pass of remarkable beauty, where picturesque rocks jut out among thick brushwood, or steep slopes, all grass and wild flowers, run high up against the sky; at times the gorge narrows into a ravine, where black volcanic crags barely leave room for the pathway along the left bank of the brawling torrent; while the old traffic-route, despairing of a footing below, passes by the heights several hundred feet overhead. The general type of scenery recalls North Wales, or the Rothen-Thurm pass of the Carpathian district in South Hungary. At last, just as the eastern sun bursts out in full light and heat over the fir-crowned mountain tops on our left, we reach a point where the valley expands into a wide marshy plain, thick-planted with maize, while the roadside is lined with rows of *Kh*ans, or halting places—long low sheds, with no accommodation to offer beyond shelter from the weather, and the possibility of fire-lighting: some are in good repair, others in various stages of broken roof and crumbling wall, others mere traces of mouldered brickwork. For in *Kh*ans, as in every other kind of building, Eastern custom or prejudice forbids repair, and prefers to supplement the injuries of time or accident by a new construction *in toto* alongside, rather than to attempt the restoration of the old one once decayed. Hence, among other causes, the frequent vestiges of deserted houses, mosques, and the like, that cumber the lines of traffic everywhere in Eastern Turkey, and convey to the traveller's mind the idea of even more ruin and decay than is really the case; being in fact as often the symbols of transportation as of desertion.

Little shops, mixed up with the *Kh*ans, offer eggs, sour apples, coarse tobacco, cigarette paper, matches, nuts, cheese, and such like articles of cheap consumption to the caravan-drivers and other passers-by. All around the hillsides, here more moderate in their slope, and patched with corn, maize and tobacco, are studded with rubble-built cottages, each one at a neighbourly distance from the other; these, taken collectively, form the village of "Khosh-Oghlan," or the "Pleasing-Boy," such being the name of the hamlet; though who was the individual boy, and in what respect he made himself so particularly agreeable, were vain now to enquire. It is the first halting-stage of the inland journey; so, obedient to the usage of which our attendants have not failed with a broad African grin to remind us, we alight at one of the booths for a cup of coffee, over-roasted and over-boiled as all Turkish coffee is, yet refreshing in its sort, and then go on our way. Seven or eight miles more lead us still up the same "Deyermend" valley, past some pretty Swiss-like wooden bridges, and many fine points of mountain view, past the straggling hamlet of "Yeseer-Oghlou," or the "Son of the Prisoner"—a Prisoner and a Son now no less forgotten by history and tradition than the "Pleasing-Boy" before mentioned—where, not long since, two Frenchmen, hacked and slashed, paid with their life-blood the penalty of the meddlesome domineering usual to their tribe among strangers; till we reached the high stone arched bridge called of "Maturajik," and, crossing by it to the other or right side of the valley, climb aloft above the torrent as it forces its way through huge clusters of columnar basalt, piled up tier over tier of rusty brown; then descend to the little plain known, as are also the many scattered houses that jot the green or brown mountain sides all round, by the title of "Jevezlik," or the "Place of Walnut-trees:" these last stand before us, green and spreading, beside the water's edge. Here again the road runs the gauntlet between shops and *Kh*ans, for we have now done eighteen miles, the ordinary day's march of a caravan from Trebizond. Besides, Jevezlik is a place of some note, partly as the residence now of a district sub-governor, formerly of a

dreaded "Dereh-Bey," or "Lord of the Valley;" a euphemism for Lord of Robberies—but more so from its central position, which renders it the meeting-point of three great tracks, and which would in classic Italy have insured its dedication to "Diana Trivia:" these are the winter road to Erzeroom, the summer ditto, and the road of Sumelas or Mariamana. Of these routes, the first follows the main valley south-west up to where it culminates in the far-off snow-flecked summits of Ziganeh, in the direction of Beiburt and Erzeroom; the second, or summer road, scrambles rather than climbs due south across the dreary heights of "Kara-Kapan," or "Black-Covering," so called, I conjecture, from its almost perpetual veil of cloud and mist, whence—but it must have been on an unusually clear day—Mr. Layard, if memory serves me right, makes Xenophon and his Greeks shout their *θάλαττα, θάλαττα*; the third path, ours now, and which leads to Sumelas, goes off south-east by a side gorge that here falls into the Deyermend valley. The sun is now high and hot; so we halt for a noon-tide bait in the spare room of a rickety Turkish coffee-house overhanging the torrent; receive the visits of some land-farmers, conservative and discontented as farmers are by prescriptive right all the world over; feast on brown bread and eggs fried in grease, *vice* anything else, unattainable in this corner of the gorgeous East; and would fain have crowned our midday rest with a nap on the floor, had not the immemorial fleas of Asia Minor pronounced their absolute veto on any such proceeding.

Well; Sumelas, not Jevezlik, is our goal. So, noon over, we remount and turn south-east, following over rock and grass the rise of the noble mountain cleft, hemmed in here and there by great basaltic masses, suddenly protruding through the limestone rocks of an older formation. Next to the cape of Hieros, or Yoros, with its fan-spread columns, the basalt pillars of Melas, as this spot is called, are the grandest—I have never visited either Skye or the Giant's Causeway—that it has been my fortune to witness anywhere. Next we cross the fierce but now shallow torrent on a covered wooden bridge that might have been imported from Zug or Luzern; and begin the final Sumelas ascent.

It follows for several miles the upward course of a deep and precipitous ravine, where huge rocks and cliffs, many hundred feet in height, are interspersed among or overhang forests of walnut, oak, beech, and pine, that might do honour to the mountain sides of Savoy itself. Under the shade, now of the branching trees, now of the wall-like crags, winds the path, bordered by a dense fringe of laurel, dwarf fir, azalea, rhododendron, and countless other tangled shrubs; it is kept in fairly good order, propped up by stone counterforts, and protected by trenches and dykes against the descending watercourses by the care of the monks, whose convent we are now approaching. On either side and in front glimpses of bare and lonely heights, herbless granite, and jagged ridges far up in the blue sky, show that we are penetrating the broad barrier of the Kolat-Dagh, the great Anatolian coast chain, that even here averages ten thousand feet in elevation, and ultimately yields only to the still more lofty Caucasus, its northern rival and parallel. At last a turn of the way brings us half-round at the foot of a monstrous rock that has for some while barred our direct view along the ravine in front; and there, suspended like a bird's nest in air far overhead, we see glimmering through black pine-shade the white walls of the convent, the object of our journey.

One last corkscrew ascent, of almost Matterhorn steepness, brings us up through the dense forest that somehow manages to cling to and girdle the cliff half-way; till, just on the edge of the leafy belt, we reach the narrow ledge, almost imperceptible from below, on which the convent is niched rather than built. Two-thirds in length of this ledge are occupied every inch, from precipice above to precipice below, by the monastic buildings; the remaining third partly forms a kind of landing-place, where visitors may wait admittance within the claustral precincts, partly is occupied by large stables and outhouses for horses and cattle. From this shelf sixty-six stone steps, of recent construction, conduct to a little iron-bound door in the convent wall, conveniently commanded by some grated windows above. Till within the last few years a long wooden ladder, let down as circumstances required, then drawn up again

from within, afforded the sole and occasional link between the monastery and the outer world; while sinister arrivals might, if they tried entrance by other means of their own, receive from the flanking windows a warmer welcome than they expected or desired.

Our coming has already been espied by the monks; and as we slowly climb the steps, the iron door ahead half opens for a moment, in sign of recognition, then closes again, while consultation goes on within as to our admittance. After a short interval the portal reopens, and displays an old monk, in the blue dress, somewhat dirty, I regret to say, and black head-gear of his order, that of St. Basil,—I may as well remark here that the orthodox Greek Church recognises this one order only; a silent protest against the multiplicity of more modern Latin discipline,—standing in the entry, while other brethren group behind him in the dim perspective of the narrow vaulted passage. Glancing at us, he notices the dagger and silver-mounted pistol of our principal negro attendant, and requests him to consign his portable arsenal to monastic keeping before crossing the threshold. To this preliminary ceremony the Darfooree objects; nor does the argument that such is the rule of St. Basil, with which the Sultan himself, were he present in person, must, under penalty of non-admittance, comply, produce any effect on African obstinacy. So, armed as he is, he turns back to look after the horses; while the monks obligingly assure us that neither animals nor groom shall want for anything during our stay here.

We enter the passage. The "Economos" or Accountant of the monastery, an elderly man, long-bearded and long-vested, with, at his side, a stout, jovial, gray-haired, red-cheeked old monk, apparently verging on the seventies, but hale and active, our destined "bear-leader," and several other brethren, all blue-dressed, bearded, and dirty, come forward to greet us; and conduct us up and down by a labyrinth of little corridors, ruinous flights of stairs, dingy cells, and unsavoury well-like courtyards, all squeezed up close between the rock on one side and the precipice on the other; till, having thus traversed the

"old buildings," which form an irregular parallelogram about two hundred feet in length by forty in breadth, we emerge on a little flagged space, neater kept than the rest; and find ourselves in presence of the famous shrine of the Panagia herself.

The body of the church, a cavern natural in its origin, but probably enlarged by art, is hollowed out in the rock, which here faces due east. The sanctuary, which in accordance with the prescription of ecclesiastical tradition also points eastwards, is here represented by a small construction, double staged, about fourteen feet in total height, and sixteen in length; its general appearance from without brings to mind the conventional ark of Biblical pictures and children's toy-shops. It projects at right angles from the stone wall with which the entrance of the cavern all round it has been closed; and, like that wall, is covered with the most appalling specimens of modern Greek mural painting; impossible saints with plate-like halos; crowded days of judgment where naked but sexless souls are being dragged by diabolical hooks into the jaws of a huge dragon, which is hell; Scriptural scenes from the stories of Moses, Elijah, etc., where large heads, no perspective, and a stiffness unrivalled by any board are the chief artistic specialities; red, yellow, and brown are the favourite colours; the whole delicately touched up with the names of innumerable pilgrims, mostly terminating, Greek fashion, in "aki" or "ides," scratched, with no respect of persons, across saints, souls, demons, and deities alike. The entrance door is close alongside of the sanctuary; and three square grated windows admit the light above. The roofing of the sanctuary is sheet copper, thick encrusted with dirt; so thick, indeed, as to enable the monks to assure you, without too violent a contradiction of your own ocular evidence, that it is not copper, but silver; the costly gift—so continue the same chroniclers—of the famous, or infamous, Sultan Murad IV. himself; who, when on his way from Constantinople to Bagdad to fight the Persians, seems to have led his army—Heaven only knows how or why—across the Kolat mountains, and to have encamped, horse, foot, and

artillery, on the goat's perch of the ravine here opposite. That Sumelas lies hundreds of miles away from the route which the said Sultan must really have taken, and that Hannibal or Napoleon I. himself would have been puzzled to drag the smallest field-piece among these precipices, are considerations which matter nothing in legend. Accordingly, so continues the tale, when the ferocious Murad first turned his bloodshot eyes on the convent, he enquired of his Begs and Pashas what that building might be; and, on their answer that it was the abode of Christian monks, gave immediate orders to his artillerymen to batter it down. But lo! no sooner were the cannon pointed at the consecrated edifice than they spun round self-moved, and began firing among the Sultan's own troops. Hereon Imperial amazement and further enquiry; met by the information that all this was the doing of the miraculous Virgin, the Panagia, who, or whose picture—for in popular Orthodox as in Roman, and in every other yet living devotion the distinction between the symbol and the original is inappreciable to any but a controversialist—tenanted the monastery. Murad, deeply impressed, and no wonder, by the miracle and its explanation, at once abandoned his destructive intentions, did due honour to the Panagia and her ministers, and, amongst other offerings, presented the silver roof in question—only he never did anything of the sort, and it is really copper.

Looking up, we now perceive that the rock above, which here overhangs sanctuary and court in an almost threatening manner, supports in one of its darkest recesses a little Byzantine picture, the Theotokos or Mother of God Herself. Dingy and faded, so much so, indeed, as to be at first sight hardly discernible from the damp stone against which it rests, this painting occupies the exact spot—we have the monks' word for it—where in the fifth century some goatherds discovered the original Panagia, the work of St. Luke, here placed by angelic agency seemingly in order to keep it out of the way. Now, however, it is deposited for more convenient veneration in the sanctuary below, where we will visit it a little later; but the copy has itself, like iron near a magnet, acquired a fair share

of miraculous efficacy by juxtaposition. From the rocky brow above, in front of the picture, distil, without ceasing, drops of water, which to the eyes of faith are always three at a time, neither more nor less; but for all I looked I could not detect any special numerical system in their fall; these drops, carefully collected in a little cistern below, possess remedial virtues equal to any recorded of the same element in the episcopal pages of Monseigneur Gaume.

While we have been thus gazing and listening, the four church bells, hung outside in a pretty little belfry of four light columns and graceful arching—the work and its costs having been alike furnished by the devotion of a wealthy Russian pilgrim—have been ringing a very hospitable, though untuneable, peal in honour of our arrival; and the monks invite us to enter the sanctuary without further delay. But it is near sunset; and the monotonous chanting of the priests inside warns us that vespers are even now going on, and the church full of worshippers. Unwilling to disturb the congregation, we defer our visit; and, adding that we are somewhat tired by our day's journey, we are considerately conducted by our hosts across the courtyard, and up a neat stone staircase to our evening quarters, namely, the chief apartment in the "new buildings."

These, completed only three years since, rise seven stages in total height, vaults included, from the precipice below to the beetling crag above; the front faces east; and its white-painted masonry, its four tiers of large square windows, and its handsome open gallery supported on slender stone pillarets that run along the whole length of the topmost story, are what first attract the admiration of the traveller as he reaches the opposite point of the ravine. The edifice is eight rooms in length and only one in thickness throughout; but the great solidity of the stonework, and the shelter of the overhanging rock against which it nestles, neutralise the danger of over-height. From foundation to roof a narrow space, protected from the weather by the wide eaves above, is left between the building and the crag behind; and here winds an ingenious zigzag of galleries

and staircases, all stone, that afford entrance to the several chambers of each story. Beneath, and partly hollowed out in the living rock, are cellars and store-caverns to which the monks alone have access; besides a large reservoir of excellent water, filled from the oozings of the inner mountain. The entire work, whether considered in itself or in the difficulties of scaffolding and construction where not a spare inch is left of the narrow shelf on which the building stands balanced as it were hundreds of feet in mid-air, is one of no small skill; and its well-considered proportion of wall, window, and gallery, with the just adaptation of every part to the practical exigencies of domestic use, claim high constructive praise, and evince a degree of good taste not always to be found among the house-architects of Western Europe. Yet the builders of "Mariamana" were from no European, not even from the Constantinopolitan school; they were mere indigenous stone-cutters, "Greek" the most, from the adjoining villages of Koroom, Mejid, and Stavros.

We stroll along the top story corridor, the openings of which are guarded by high iron railings, and look across the dizzy depths below, whence rises the ceaseless roar of the Melas torrent, and beyond the dense masses of beech and pine that cluster on the ravine side opposite, to the lonely peaks of Kolat-Dagh, seemingly close in front, and rose-tinted with the last rays of the setting sun. Soon the evening air blows cool; at this elevation—4,100 feet above the sea, as my aneroid informs me—the night temperature is rarely such as to allow of loitering long out of doors. Five months of the year on an average the convent snow lies unmelted, and for five more of the remaining seven mist and rain are the rule, not the exceptions. The very cats of the establishment, large, tame, and well fed, bear witness by their long fur and their bushy fox-like tails to the general coldness of the atmosphere in which they live. Still the site is healthy, and in proof of this an old centagenarian monk presents himself to view hale and hearty among his comrades, who, to judge by appearances, are mostly themselves in a fair way to rival his longevity. But

besides, absence of care, and indeed of brain-work in general, has perhaps something to do with this prolonged and vigorous vitality. Nor have they many privations to endure, except what the numerous fasts and abstinences of their antique ritual impose; the convent is wealthy to a degree that would have long since moved the greed of any but a Turkish Government, while the monks in residence are not over numerous—fifteen indeed is their average total. However, besides its regular inmates, this convent harbours also several members of distant monasteries from different parts of Anatolia, Roumelia, and even Syria, sent hither to a quiet retreat, or mitigated prison, or both, thus to expiate some past breach of discipline or to prevent some menaced scandal. Lastly, a large number of the monks—though how many my grizzled informant could not, or perhaps would not, say—are scattered on longer or shorter leave of absence without the walls, in quest of the temporal welfare of the community, or superintending the numerous farms belonging to it, some by purchase, more by legacy. For in the Orthodox, no less than in any other Church, the passports of the rich to a better world are seldom countersigned "gratis." As a natural consequence, the fields and havings of the Sumelas Panagia lie thick scattered along the entire South Euxine coast from Trebizond to Constantinople, and bring in revenues sufficient for a moderate-sized duchy. Nor is all this wealth consumed in selfish indulgence, or hoarded up by miserly precaution. While the monks still, as before, content themselves with the narrow and cranky buildings of the original convent, the handsome and commodious lodgings of newer construction, the cost of which cannot have fallen short of 4,000*l.* at least, are freely abandoned to the eight thousand pilgrims or guests who, on a rough calculation, pass from twenty-four hours to fifteen days, some more, some less, year by year within these walls, free of board as of shelter. Nor should we forget the neat pathway, solidly constructed and sedulously repaired by the sole care and cost of the monks, along many difficult miles of mountain ravine, which else would be not only dangerous but almost inaccessible; a path,

thanks to the self-taught workmen of Mariamana, now safe, and even, comparatively speaking, commodious — qualities estimable in roads and creditable to the road makers anywhere; most creditable, because most rare, in Anatolia.

Escorted by our hosts we re-enter our night's lodging. The large and handsome room—neat still, because new—is garnished with divans, carpets, and a supplementary stove for cold weather in the centre; over the fireplace hangs conspicuously a photographic print of Russian manufacture, representing an apocryphal act of Cretan heroism, wherein a priest is enacting, torch in hand, an imitation of "Old Minotti's" suicidal exploit in Byron's *Siege of Corinth*. Perhaps it is meant as a hint on occasion for the "Economos" of Sumelas: if so, let us hope that he will never be necessitated to take it. The period of strict abstinence, which among the "orthodox" precedes the great festival of the Virgin, has already commenced; and as the hour for supper draws on, we own to a horrible anticipation of finding ourselves included among the eaters of olives and unseasoned vegetables—poor restoratives after a long day's ride. But such treatment of their guests forms no part of our hospitable entertainers' programme. Soup, flesh, fowl, eggs, caviare, butter, and so forth, soon cover the table; and the wine, produce of conventual vineyards, is good enough to show how excellent a liquor might be afforded by the Anatolian grape did it but receive more skilful culture. Coffee and tea follow, and when time comes for the night's rest we recline on well-stuffed mattresses beneath quilted coverings of silk, embroidered with gold and silver thread, not unworthy of the state-bed of Elizabeth at Kenilworth, or of James I. at Hatfield.

Next morning we pay our promised visit to the church, and entering by the narrow door in the angle of the sanctuary, find ourselves in a cavern about forty feet in length and breadth, by fifteen or sixteen in height, lighted up by the customary three east windows in the outer wall. Sides and roof are decorated with paintings in the style already described, where to disjoin art from devotion, and to throw ridicule on both, seems the

principal aim of the artist; damp and incense smoke have, however, charitably done much to cover the multitude of pictorial sins. Within the church are many other objects worthier of observation, and some even of real interest. At the entrance of the sanctuary hang, one over the other, two small silk curtains, richly worked; which being withdrawn disclose to our view the identical Panagia, the likeness, or rather, to put it more correctly, the emblem of the Virgin, by St. Luke—of equal merit in all respects, natural and supernatural, as of equal antiquity, it would seem, and very possibly of equal authenticity, with the better known portrait venerated at Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome. A blackish outline, chiefly defined by the gold-leaf ground that limits head and shoulders, indicates the figure. Close beside it hang, obliquely from the ceiling, like masts in slings, two huge wax tapers, wrapped in some material, costly, but now undistinguishable through its dingy encrustments; these form a part of the præter-historical peace-offering of Sultan Murad IV., mentioned farther back. Near the tapers is also suspended an enormous circular chandelier of silver gilt, with a quantity of little ex-votos, silver boats, gold filagree ornaments, coins, and the like, dangling from its rim: this too, if we credit the monks, is the memorial of the repentance of another Sultan, Selim II.—on what occasion shall be related in its place. Meanwhile we deposit the offering that courtesy requires in the all-receiving platter before the Panagia; and are next called on to revere the special object of devout pilgrimage, a small silver rocking-cradle, of pretty but not ancient workmanship, consecrated to the goddess of the shrine. Into this cradle a piece of money (the more precious the metal, the greater its efficacy) is to be laid; after which the pilgrim, having thrice raised and lowered the toy and its contents on the palm of his or her hand, before the unveiled Panagia, deposits it on the plate of offerings. Should the cradle when thus set down continue to rock, the happy votary will infallibly become before long a father or a mother, as the case may be; its immobility on the contrary is a sad but conclusive presage of married sterility. Now barrenness is at the present day no less an

opprobrium in the East than it was in the age of Hannah and Pheninnah; and its prevention or cure is the motive of far the greater number of pilgrimages to Mariamana; even newly-married Mahometans, not to mention Armenians, Latins, and other unorthodox Christians of either sex, prove by their frequent visits to the cradle of Sumelas how catching a thing is popular belief. The residue of the pilgrims are mostly petitioners for the recovery of a sick child, or relative, or self, and to them also the cradle obligingly extends the subject matter of its oracles. The origin of this particular observance probably does not go back farther than Comnenian times; though the monks refer it, like the foundation of the convent itself, to the fifth century.

Passing rapidly over the inspection of a copious store of ecclesiastical vestments and paraphernalia, that might call forth the raptures of an antiquary or a ritualist, we come in front of a small wooden cabinet, placed in a recess of the cavern, and carefully locked. This the monks now open, and draw forth from its nook the famous Golden Bull of Alexios III., Emperor of Trebizond, who in 1365 confirmed by this document the privileges and exemptions of the Sumelas convent and its possessions; and, amongst other precious tokens of Imperial liberality, bestowed on them the right of defending themselves as best they could against the Turkoman inroads, which the pretentious empire was unable to check, even at but a day's distance from the capital. At the head of the "Bull," a long narrow strip of rolled paper, appear the portraits of Alexios and his wife, the Empress Theodora, holding between them on their joined hands a small model church, much as ecclesiastical donors love to appear in Western monuments of a corresponding age: the characters of the writing are large and fine drawn; the Imperial autograph, in huge red ink letters, sprawls below; but the gold seals originally appended have long since disappeared from the foot of the scroll. The most remarkable feature in this memorial of later Byzantine times (given at full length by Fallmereyer in his publication of 1843) is the inflated verbosity of the style; a verbosity subsequently adopted with

many other vices of the degraded empire by the victorious Ottomans.

Of more real importance, though inferior in antiquity, is the paper next unrolled before our eyes, namely, the firman of the Sultan Selim II., also confirmatory, but this time to good purpose, of all the old monastic rights, privileges, and exemptions. It is remarkable that in this document the handwriting conforms to the stiff and old-fashioned Naskhee of Arab origin, instead of the elegant semi-Persian Divanee of later official use.

The quotations from the Koran that garnish it from first to last exemplify a tone frequently adopted by the Osmanlee rulers in their day of power. Certainly no miracle is needed to account for the concession of this favour, one in entire accordance with Turkish and even with Mahometan usage everywhere. The Sumelas monks have, however, a legend ready to hand, and thus it runs: Once on a time Sultan Selim came on a hunting-party to this neighbourhood, and while pursuing his chase up the Melas ravine beheld for the first time the great monastery. To become aware of its existence and to resolve its destruction were one and the same thing in the mind of the tyrant. But before he could so much as frame his guilty thought into words of command, he was stricken with paralysis, and laid up a helpless sufferer in a village close by. There he might have remained to the end of his wicked life, had not the Panagia graciously appeared to him in a vision, and suggested the expiation of his crime and the simultaneous recovery of his health by means of the document in question, further accompanied by the douceur of the great circular chandelier that we have already seen suspended before the sanctuary; and as, to borrow Smith the weaver's logic, the firman and the chandelier are both alive at this day to testify the prodigy: "therefore deny it not." Anyhow, the firman of Selim II. proved a more efficacious protection to the monastery and its land than the "Bull" issued by the Comnenian emperor; and its repeated renewals by succeeding Sultans, from Selim II. to Abd-el-Mejeed, form a complete and not uninstructive series in the

Mariamana archives, to which we refer the indiscriminating denouncers of Turkish intolerance and Islamitic oppression.

Here were also many other curious documents and manuscripts laid up, say the monks; but a fire which some years since consumed a part of the convent, and pilfering archæological pilgrims, are assigned as the causes of their disappearance. A Greek Testament, supposed to be of great antiquity, was shown us; but the paper on which it is written, and the form of the characters, bring its date down to the fourteenth or thirteenth century at earliest.

We go the round of what else remains for notice in the cavern: a fine carved reading-desk, eagle-supported, for the lessons of the day; three or four more Panagias, all miraculous; more church-plate; a painted screen, and the like; but these objects have no exceptional interest, and we soon find ourselves again in the dazzling sunlight of the paved court outside. Next we roam about the "old buildings," timber the most, with huge overhanging eaves, and something of a Swiss cottage appearance. But nowhere does any inscription, carving, or the like indicate date or circumstance of construction, nor has any diary or "log-book" of domestic or conventual occurrences ever been kept within these walls. The memories of the monks, mere uneducated peasants they, form the only chronicle; and memory, like other mental faculties, has but a narrow range when deadened by the sameness of a life that unites agricultural with monastic monotony. Little is here known of the past, and that little is uncertain in epoch and apocryphal in detail, if not in substance. Nor has the establishment ever undergone what, had it taken place, would have been of all other things a sign-mark in its annals—the profanation of the spoiler. Roving bands, Kurde or Turkoman, have indeed been often tempted by the report of hoarded treasures to prowl about the woods of Sumelas, and have cast wistful eyes at the Panagia's rock-perched eyrie; but the narrow path that winds up the precipice is available only at the good-will and permission of the convent inhabitants themselves; and from all other sides, around, above, the birds that flap their wings against the sheer crag of a

thousand feet and more could alone find access to Mariamana; while a blockade, if attempted, would be indefinitely baffled by the capacious store-rooms and cisterns of the fabric. From the Ottoman Government itself the monks, like most of their kind in other parts of the empire, have experienced nothing but protection, or, better still, non-interference; and the freedom of their hospitality, while it does credit to the convent, bears also good witness to its inviolate security. This hospitality is indeed proportioned in some degree to the rank and social position of visitors or pilgrims, but no one is wholly excluded from it, nor is any direct recompense exacted or received from rich or poor, "Greek" or stranger. Of course the shrine gets its offerings—small ones, as a rule, from Greeks; larger from Russians and Georgians; most munificent in any case when prayers are believed to have been heard. The birth or convalescence of a child contributes to the wealth no less than to the fame of the Panagia. But payment for board and lodging is unknown, however numerous the guests, and however long their stay. Indeed, so scrupulous are the monks regarding the gratuitousness of their welcome, that when, after having deposited our offerings in the church, we wished before leaving the convent, some hours later, to make an additional and more general donation, it was at first absolutely refused, and was at last only accepted under the assurance that it had been originally meant for the sanctuary, where its presentation at the foot of some shrine or other had been, said we, unintentionally omitted.

Yet hospitality is after all, it may be said, a virtue that has no necessary connection either with present civilisation or with future progress; one that to fail in is reproach, but to possess no very high praise. Besides, it is, with comparatively rare exceptions, a quality too common in the East for special commendation; Kurdes, Turkomans, Arabs, Armenians and the rest are all hospitable after their kind, some profusely so. What particular merit then shall we assign to the monks of Sumelas to justify the existence of a not inconsiderable number of men, and of widely extended demesnes, withdrawn from the

natural current of life, and the "ringing grooves" of the onward world? Learning these monks certainly neither store up in themselves, nor promote in others; of dogmatic or moral lore they are lamentably ignorant; in agricultural craft they do not excel the average or tend to improve the practice; from a religious point of view they represent and aid to maintain what, from a historical point of view, can hardly appear other than a pious fraud, a myth, edifying, but unsubstantial. Individually benevolent, hospitable, industrious even, they belong to a system essentially narrow, stationary, unproductive. If this be the "Cross" of the East, what advantage has it over the "Crescent?" And is it from night like this we are to look for the dawn of a better day in the regions of the Levant? If there is little to commend in the Turkish government symbolised by the Mosque at Trebizond, was the rule of Alexios III., the feeble and ostentatious patron of Sumelas, a whit better? nay, was it not on the whole the more sterile, the more corrupt, the more worthless of the two?

This and more might be, and, under various forms of vituperative scoff, has already often been said; and a very plausible half-truth it is; a very misleading one too. Under the traditionary legend, under the præter-historical myth, under the uncouth and seemingly meaningless disguise of monastic dress, seclusion, torpor if you will, is veiled the "Power from the Unknown God," the "Promethean Conqueror," whose triumph over the Meccan Titan crowns the prophecy of the latest of England's true bards and demigods, the Pythian Shelley:

> "The moon of Mahomet
> Arose; and it shall set;
> While blazoned as on heaven's immortal noon
> The Cross leads generations on:"

and even the wonder-working pictures and rocking cradles of Sumelas do not obliterate, they only travesty or obscure the absolute and unchangeable sentence.

It is now mid-day; and before we redescend into the valley, in purpose thence to attempt some sketch of the picturesque

building from the opposite side, we stand a few minutes in the gallery, and take a last look at the lovely scene before us, now bathed in the silent splendour of an Anatolian noon. Far aloft in air stretch the bare snow-streaked heights where passes the summer track to Beyboort and Erzeroom; below the dense tree-tops are pierced here and there by fantastic rock pinnacles, splinters detached centuries ago from the precipice on either side; ten of these grey islets in the leafy depth are crowned by as many little white chapels; they also belong to the Mariamana jurisdiction, and in each of them, when the appropriate anniversary comes round, the festival of its peculiar saint, Eugenius, John, or some one else of the ten spiritual guardians of Trebizond, is duly celebrated by the Basilian monks of Sumelas. Beneath rushes and foams the Alpine torrent, the waters of which we have thus traced backwards from their marshy exit at Trebizond almost to their fountain-head.

The monks with undiminished hospitality press us to stay; and when we insist on the necessity of setting out, lest night should overtake us before regaining Jevezlik, are warm in their farewell. "You will make your English friends acquainted with us and our convent," says, with an accent of request, the old monk who has been our chief attendant. I promise; and thus I keep my word.

ANATOLIAN SPECTRE-STORIES.

The Essay "Anatolian Spectre-stories" first appeared in the January number of the 'Cornhill Magazine' for 1873; it had been written during the preceding year. I mention these dates, as by them such casual allusions as *e. g.* the one to Mr. Disraeli and the "melancholy" Atlantic—Mr. Disraeli, or Lord Beaconsfield, was always good at characterizing, but never better than in the instance alluded to, may be more readily understood.

As to the stories themselves—

> "I cannot tell how the truth may be;
> I tell the tale as 'twas told to me;"

but a longer acquaintance with Trebizond and the Pontic region went far in my own personal feeling (which where others are concerned counts, and ought to count in matters of this kind, for nothing) to give countless tales and occurrences of the sort a much deeper significance than I have chosen to assign or even hint at in the Essay itself.

APART from any consideration as to their intrinsic or objective significance, the spectral tales which constitute no inconsiderable portion of the "folk-lore" of every country have a very real subjective interest, by the insight they not rarely afford into the national character and circumstances of narrators and believers. From this point of view, stories, which at first sight appear no more than the useless and fragmentary caprices of idle fancy, prove—I apologise for the accidental paronomasia—skeleton keys wherewith we may at times unlock much that refuses to open to the regular instruments of evidential investigation, and thus gain access to treasures else not only hidden but unattainable. Or, as stars, veiled from view by the nearer splendour of the day, come out distinct by night, so that the same darkness which conceals from us whatever is close at hand, extends our range of vision to that which was before lost to it in the dis-

tance; so far off affinities of race, the buried substratum of real national character, traces of pre-historic events, and much else that the fuller light of recent times effaces from the palimpsest of history, become apparent to sight in the shadow of the night-side of human nature. And even where this is not the case, these fanciful tales have their worth, as showing how like are workings of men's minds under like circumstances and conditions.

Meanwhile, the better to avoid all danger of entanglement in a very profitless and moreover endless discussion, I may as well from the outset remark that, in thus considering spectral stories merely from their human or subjective side, I have no intention of impugning, any more than of asserting, their objective or præter-human character: I simply prescind from it. For, in fact, the correspondence, or, more correctly speaking, the identity of external and of mental phenomena, the impossibility of separating, except in abstract classification, between the "ego" that perceives, and the "non-ego" that is perceived, are not less certain axioms of philosophical truth than the unity and permanence of force, the convertibility of so-called mind and matter, and the ultimate identity of the phenomenal and complex, of which they are the necessary corollaries. But, in the particular instance of the subject before us, the external or "non-ego" side may be safely left out of question, since its isolated and seemingly capricious phenomena supply no clue to useful research. "A good Muslim will not occupy himself with that which does not concern him," said, or is reported to have said, Mahomet one day, in answer to an impertinent and meddlesome questioner; and a sound mind, whether Muslim or other, will decline to waste time and trouble on a subject of mere curiosity, unlikely to be gratified, and, were it even gratified, utterly sterile in regard of this field assigned us "to dress it and to keep it," the questionable Eden of our present existence.

Restricting ourselves accordingly to the purely subjective import of these uncanny stories, it is curious to observe the wide extent of their geographical area, and how not unfrequently

phantasms supposed to be the exclusive and undesirable property of some particular country or race, show their unwelcome forms in other and far-distant regions, and among races of no apparent community, even the most remote, of origin. I have myself had a story, first told me by a Norfolk fireside, repeated to me under a Hindoo thatch in Guzerat; and have found the native of the shores of the Persian Gulf subject to the same ghostly terrors as the fisherman of the Scottish coast. But the strangest coincidence is when the specific and distinctive form assumed by the superstition is one independent, so far as can be discerned at least, not only of popular creed, education, tradition, or custom, but even of the circumstantial surroundings and adjuncts which might else with some show of probability be assigned as explanatory of the particular idea or phantom. And it is exactly to this class that some of the spectre-tales current in this Pontic region—the same which supplied Ovid with his "Tristia," Chrysostom with a tomb, Offenbach with an opera-title, and myself with a consulate—belong.

Asia Minor, with its wild variety of scenery, its many historical memories, its vigorous and semi-civilized, or rather, according to the latter-day European standard, semi-barbarous, races, each of which develops itself much after its own fashion under the effete rule of the effete Osmanlee, has, it might easily be anticipated, an unusually large share in these equivocal treasures of the imagination, some of them resembling, even in their supplementary details, those existing elsewhere, others again more distinctive in their local colouring and shape. The banshee of Ireland, the haunted house of England, the Scandinavian fetch, the Arab ghowl, the Teutonic witch, the Celtic sorcerer, even the universal "revenant," or, if I may be allowed the expression, commonplace ghost, have each and all their counterpart, sometimes their identity, in what was once the Empire of Trebizond. How much of them is exotic, how much indigenous, would not always be easy to decide. But a couple of specimens, selected out of the countless wonder-tales of the land, may suffice us, whether for conjecture or amusement.

We have, all of us, I should think, listened with awe, perhaps,

in our childhood, though probably with a very opposite feeling in later years, to legendary stories of the "spirits of the mine," the "little folk," "cobolds," "mountain dwarfs," and whatever other descriptive name the præter-human personalities may rejoice in, who, in Germany especially, were or still are said to frequent mines and mining districts, and to keep watch, occasionally with beneficent, more often with malicious purpose, over the treasures of hidden metal. Who has not heard how jealously these "little men" guard the veins of precious ore? What cunning devices they employ to baffle human research? How, if surprised by some unforeseen accident or superior skill, they go about to ransom their secret by presenting the intruder with a piece—or, perhaps, the more orthodox number of three pieces—of what seems at first mere rubbish, lighted charcoal it may be, or refuse slag, but which, if not over-hastily cast away, discovers itself by the morning light to be pure silver or red gold? Though, indeed, in all the tales I can call to mind, the gift proves always of evil omen, and one way or other brings misfortune on the receiver—beliefs of which the Harz mountains are, if I remember right, the head-quarters, although not unknown to German miners elsewhere, in Saxony, for instance. Certainly, these mountain-dwarfs bear an especially Teutonic, though not an Aryan stamp; in Europe itself the Cluricane, and the Celtic "good-folk" in general, are of a different type; while in the Asiatic lands tenanted by the so-called "Semitic" races the entire genus is unknown; though, perhaps, the scarcity of mines in that part of the East may sufficiently account for the absence of their guardian sprites. Even in India, where mines are of ancient date, and phantom-tales of almost every description plentiful enough, I never heard or read of this particular kind.

It was not, therefore, without considerable surprise, that here, in the Pontic angle of the Euxine coast, and in this most un-European and un-Teutonic corner of God's earth, and among a population of mixed origin certainly, but in which Turanian blood and institutions have long predominated, I lately came—in hearsay, of course—on the identical diminutive objects of

my childhood's wonderment, and found them, moreover, in full possession of the popular belief. But I must, if the impatience of my readers for a "ghost-story" will permit, preface my tale with enough of circumstance and description to render it intelligible to those—probably the greater number—for whom Trebizond and Pontus are hardly more than unsuggestive names.

About fifty miles inland to the south of Trebizond, among the lofty mountain ranges which knit the backbone of Anatolia, and divide those great tributaries of the Persian Gulf, the Tigris, and the Euphrates, from the many but less celebrated waters that flow into the Black Sea pool, is situated the small town of "Silverborough," such being the literal translation of its Turkish name, Gumesh-khaneh. It is the centre of a rich and extensive metalliferous district, silver, copper, iron, lead; the last being the most abundant, as the first is the most precious of its ores. The town itself is perched high up on a precipitous mountain side of shaly rock, some 5,000 feet above the sea; and immediately overhead frowns a black cliff, pierced by a large cavernous entrance, which once led to the principal shaft of the silver mines whence the place has its name. These mines are said to have been worked in the times of the Byzantine emperors, of the Roman colonists, of the Pontic kings, it may be; but of these last all popular memory has long since perished off from the birth-land of Mithridates. Certainly as late as the beginning of the present century they yielded a very respectable income to their possessors, the Begs or hereditary land-owners of the neighbourhood, who extracted the ore, and smelted it on the spot, after the rough, but not wholly unskilled, fashion of the country workmen.

But when, in an evil hour for the Ottoman Empire, Sultan Mahmoud the Second ascended the throne of Stambool, and in swift sequence of events the Begs of Gumesh-khaneh had to descend from theirs; when the Turkish autocrat inaugurated those measures which time-serving and short-sighted flattery called the reform, but which were, in the instinctively sounder judgment of the East itself, the first and decisive steps towards

the final decadence and disintegration of the great empire by the resumption of the old military and semi-feudal land tenures, and the abolition of all hereditary privileges, whether enjoyed by Aghas, Begs, or Pashas, except those of the now isolated throne; then—was it chance? was it design? it is hard to find out the truth in a matter like this—but scarcely had the recently-appointed officials of the new Government system taken the mines of Gumesh-khaneh into their hands, than a flood of water, poured forth from a hitherto barred-up spring deep in the heart of the mountain itself, burst into the central shaft, and spreading, filled every chamber and gallery. In a country destitute alike of capital and of engineering means sufficient to drain the submerged excavations, the mischief once done was irreparable; and from that day to the present the mine has remained unworked and unproductive. But the cavernous entry is still half open; and the neglected heaps of slag, mixed with fragments of rich silver ore piled up near its mouth, bear witness to the copiousness of the mineral veins within. Some time ago I visited the spot, and remarked with a little surprise that the townsfolk, who in these districts are usually eager enough to perform duty as guides to a European explorer, in the vague hope that his superior knowledge may discover "something to their advantage," manifested on this occasion an unwillingness to accompany me which I could not at the time account for; it was not till several months later that I learnt the reason.

A thousand feet below the crag, in the deep valley where the rapid Charshoot river rushes by on its way to the Black Sea, there lies on either side of the stream a lovely expanse of garden and orchard, the bright green foliage contrasting with the black and splintered rocks around. These orchards, now that the mines are no longer worked, are the principal occupation and resource of the town of Gumesh-khaneh, and are celebrated throughout the land for the excellence of their produce, pears especially; but the prolonged winter-cold, for snow lies here on the ground three months at a stretch—does not allow of the more delicate fruits of Smyrna and the South.

Along the margin of this orchard strip, between it and the

steep ascent leading up to the town itself and the deserted mines, passes the high road of Erzeroom and Trebizond; a road no longer, it is true, thronged by the Persian caravans, of which it had almost the monopoly before Russia had forced and flung open the gates of the Caucasus, that secular barrier between East and West, but still a busy highway by day, and even, in the warmer season of the year, by night; and not much better adapted for a haunt of solitude-loving spectres than would be, say, the road of Hammersmith or of Putney.

It was precisely here, however, that the mountain dwarfs, or little men of the mine, took a fancy to show themselves after the fashion which I will now relate, as one summer afternoon I myself heard the tale from a person who had been, or at any rate professed to have been, an eye-witness of the event. A quiet, prosaic, sallow-faced, shop-keeping Mahometan of Trebizond, with no "speculation in his orbs" beyond that of retail buying and selling; his parentage of that mixed breed here called Turk or Osmanlee, and in which the aboriginal Tiberene stock seems to have been crossed with Byzantine, Turkoman, and Turkish graftings in about equal proportions. I was seated with him, Eastern manner, in his shop, talking, as the phrase goes, of "everything and nothing," when, the conversation happening to turn on mines and metals, he volunteered the following story, which I give, as nearly as I can remember, in his own words.

"In the summer of the year before last," said he, "I went to Gumesh-khaneh on business, and remained there a few days. The heat was excessive; so when I set out to return, I waited till near sunset, intending to go no further that evening than a village some two hours' distant on the high-road, and there to pass the night. A Greek friend of mine from the town"—(I should here remark that the name "Greek" has in this neighbourhood nothing synonymous with "Hellene," but simply means one belonging to the Greek or "orthodox" form of Christianity: this class comprises about a third of the natives in the Gumesh-khaneh mountains, those probably in whom the later Byzantine element predominates)—"joined me as I was

leaving the place; he was going in the same direction as myself. It was now late summer, and night soon overtook us, but the moon was up and bright, so that the road lay before us as clear as by day. We had left the last straggling houses of the town behind us, but the gardens, as you know, continue for a good way further alongside the highway: everything was silent and still, not a living creature in sight.

"Suddenly from under the black shadow of an orchard close on our right hand, a number of figures issued forth, and placed themselves full in our path. They resembled human beings in everything except size; for their height, which was the same, or nearly the same, of all, did not exceed an arshine" (that is, in English measure, a foot and a half) "at most. But, this peculiarity apart, they were perfectly well-formed men and all dressed alike, in a sort of dark green cloth, richly ornamented with silver; every one of them wore, too, a silver-mounted dagger at his girdle. One after another, in long procession, they emerged from the low ground and thick-planted trees by the roadside, and ranged themselves in the white moonlight across the way: then coming forward they made a circle round us, and bade us by signs leave the road and come along with them. I looked towards the Greek, my companion, and he to me; but surprise or something else had taken from us all power of speech, and we obeyed in silence. The little figures, which seemed all to act in concert, and without any particular leader, now led us off the highway, and conducted us by a side-path winding among the orchards lower down, but without our coming near the river; though in what direction I could not make out. But as we went on threading our way between the trees, my courage began to return, so I whispered to my Greek friend, and asked him what he thought these strange little creatures might be, and whether we had not best get away from them.

"In a hurried voice he answered that he knew them well for what they were, the spirits of the Gumesh-khaneh mine: that if we did not resist them they would do us no harm, but that any attempt at escape would be unwise and dangerous.

"So we continued walking on and on in silence, like captives to this curious band, till we found ourselves in a half-open space, almost clear of trees, and brightly lighted up by the moon overhead: around were thick-planted gardens and deep shadow. Here the dwarfs made signs to us—they seemed chary of words—to stop and sit down; we did so, taking our places among the dry leaves on the grass, while the queer little figures, with their dark dresses and high-peaked silver-edged hoods, posted themselves on every side, some sitting, some standing as if on guard.

"My companion was the first to break the silence, by asking them why they had detained us, and what they wanted of us? They answered, but in a hollow distant-sounding voice, that seemed to come from no one amongst them in particular, and to be more like an echo than spoken words, that we had no right to be travelling the road at that hour, and that having once captured us they did not intend letting us go. The moon was near the full; but at the voice her light faded, though there was no cloud in the sky, as though from an eclipse; and in the gloom the forms around us appeared to increase in number and in size, with threatening looks and gestures. I was terrified, and hesitated whether to remain or fly, but my companion whispered to me, 'Keep quiet, and never mind them; all we have to do is to remain still as we are; they must let us go before the morning.'

"Again the moonlight returned, bright as before. But the night seemed endless to us as we sat watching there; figures came and figures went, all dwarfs, and all exactly like the one to the other, till the whole grove and place seemed alive with them. Their numbers, too, went on growing till they were a multitude past counting, and one could no longer see between them, so dense was the crowd. Then they brought out musical instruments, drums, fifes, and bagpipes, and, joining in a circle round us, began to caper and dance, every now and then inviting or urging us by signs to join in with them; but we gave no sign of noticing them, and remained seated without moving or speaking. Then their dance grew madder, and their

invitations to us more urgent, threatening with signs if we did not comply; they even made as though they would lay hands on us and compel us by force, but they always stopped short when near us, and we continued where we were, and made them no answer. But the moon was fast sinking, the light around grew dusky red, the air blew chill; and now the crowd of little figures began to decrease, and thinned off rapidly, though how or whither they went I could not see; they seemed rather to melt away, and became fewer and fewer, till, after a short time, only two remained, one of them, as I now observed for the first time, with something like a plume in his head-dress, and another without. These two came up to us, and by gestures commanded us to rise and follow them—they would put us on our road again.

"Very glad was I to get up: the dwarfs led the way, and we followed. It was now nearly dark, for the moon had disappeared behind the mountains, and the dawn had not yet broken; our path too was closely overshadowed by the orchard-trees; there was barely light enough for us to pick our way. As we went one of the phantoms, he with the plume, came up to my side; but his height was now equal to my own, or more. He put into my hand three good-sized pebbles, and said, 'Take care of these, I give them you as a remembrance;' then adding, 'you can now go straight on, the high-road is before you,' suddenly he disappeared. The other vanished also; there was no one on the path but my companion and myself, and we two walked on in silence through the orchards. The stones in my hand felt heavy; and not caring to carry them, I chucked away first one then a second; when my friend, hearing the noise, turned round and stopped me, saying, 'Do not throw them away, they are most likely of value.' However two were already gone, but I kept the third, though it was so dark that I could not make out what it was. A few minutes after we got fairly out of the gardens and on to the high-road, but at a considerable distance from the place where we had left it.

"Puzzled and tired out we sat down by the wayside and waited for the daylight. It was not long in coming; I then

looked at the stone in my hand and found that it had the appearance of silver, as indeed silver it was. We went back into the gardens, trying to retrace our steps as nearly as possible, and hunted about for the other two lumps, but could not find them anywhere. The Greek, my companion, was by trade a silversmith, so I gave him the strangely acquired piece of metal for his use; its weight was about one hundred dirhems" (*i.e.*, three-fourths of an English pound avoirdupois), "it was pure silver."

Such was his story. I asked him what he thought of the whole affair. He replied that there could be no doubt of the dwarfs being the spirits of the mine, for they had often been seen by others, and always much in the same way; though he had never heard of their doing any serious harm to anybody. But why they had interfered with him in particular, who had absolutely nothing to do with the Gumesh-khaneh mines, he could not tell; but fancied it might have all taken place on account of his Greek friend, who, as a native of the town, and a workman in silver too, might have had some designs of utilizing the old excavations, some plan for draining the submerged shaft; who could tell? As for himself, he had evidently never indulged in any theorizings about the affair; it was for him a plain fact, like any other that might have happened; it did not even seem to have much aroused his curiosity; a queer apathy which I have often observed among uneducated people, and much resembling, I should think, the way in which the yet less developed minds of animals receive the impressions of what though around them, is not in their own line.

I asked him, with a view to further enquiry, what had become of his friend of that night; and whether he were still at Gumesh-khaneh. He answered, "No; that after this adventure, and having appropriated and made use of the silver, everything went wrong with him; his children sickened, and two died, his house fell out of repair, his business did not prosper, and that before a twelvemonth had passed, he emigrated with some other Greeks to the Russian territory in the Caucasus, whence he had not returned."

No one can fail to observe how marked, feature for feature, is the family resemblance in this story between the mountain-folk or subterranean dwarfs of the Asiatic neighbourhood of Trebizond and their kindred in the Thuringian Harzberg. The idea does not look like a Turkish one; nor, I believe, does it exist in Georgia across the frontier; it has no place either in Arab or Mahometan legends as such. The very slight and occasional intercourse between the natives of this country and Germans in particular, whether of the working class or otherwise, does not seem ground enough to warrant the theory that a belief of this kind could have been imported by European visitors; besides, such have in general far other occupations than that of adding one fancy more to the large stock in hand already existing among the people. When we are shown at Jerusalem the window out of which Mary Magdalene gazed as the Saviour went by to Calvary, or when in Egypt the sycamore-tree is pointed out to us under which the Virgin and Child rested when fleeing from Bethlehem to Cairo, we have but to look round, and the explanation is ready in the neighbouring Franciscan convent or the missionary priest. But the goblins of the mines have in their service, so far as I am aware, no similar apostles, for the best of all possible reasons, that it would be no one's interest to undertake the task. Nor, again, do the special landscape features of bare rocks and leafy gardens, even on a shiny night in the summer season of the year, announce any intrinsic or even plausible connection with this peculiar vagary of the human imagination. It may be, however, that the notion is simply an inherited one, either from the aboriginal Tiberenes and Chalybes of the coast, or from their Byzantine colonisers: most probably, I should think—though I cannot call to mind anything definite as corroborative of my conjecture—from the latter. Mr. Tylor, perhaps, of all men living, might best be able to hazard a solution of the question.

There are, however, phantoms of another cast, common, I believe, though with some differences of local shaping and colouring, to all countries, and by no means unfrequent in these, which may more readily be accounted for, whether by

transmitted belief, or even by the simpler hypothesis of excited imagination, suggestive surroundings, and the like; I allude to the popular stories according to which, in some evil hour or uncanny spot, the semblance of a well-known form or voice is assumed by a malicious spirit that seeks by this disguise to lure its intended victim into deadly terror or bodily hurt. From that land of legends, the Scottish Border, where the White Lady of Avenel entices Father Philip down the stream into the dangerous weir-pool, to the lone southern desert where the Arabian ghoul by not dissimilar artifices leads the wayfarer astray to his death amid the pathless sands; sometimes half in malice, not unalloyed by sport, as a Robin Goodfellow or Puck; sometimes in fiendish earnest, as the ghastly Poludniza of the Russian harvest fields, or the hollow half-man of the Brazilian forests; however various the modifications, the idea is everywhere essentially the same. Generally, too, it is to be found—and this may render the explanation easier to those who are careful to answer in such a matter—in connection with that other equally widespread superstition, which associates special spiritual powers and manifestations with special spots; and not unfrequently even with special times and seasons of the common year.

For fancies of this kind, few apter places could be found than Trebizond. An old half-ruined city, a wide extent of crumbling walls and desolate towers, a confused relic-heap of successive histories and creeds, Pontine, Greek, Roman, Byzantine, and Turk; within, accumulated memories of violence, crime, and bloodshed; without, wild surroundings of dark mountain glen, trackless forest, and melancholy sea,—for melancholy the leaden mist-covered Black Sea is, even more than the Irish Channel or the Atlantic, as Mr. Disraeli himself, were he here, would allow—it is but natural if the semi-barbarous and totally uneducated inhabitants of such a site should have their share of belief in the phantom "mocker," and should surround him with that atmosphere of mingled gloom and degradation which especially characterizes the memorials of the ignoble Comnenian dynasty, which more than any other has impressed its mark on town and

people. And so in fact it is: and I might easily compose a volume—and a very useless one it would be—of the spectral tales of my own next-door neighbours. One such may, however, suffice; I have selected it out of the heap, partly because it is more than usually illustrative both of the localities themselves, and of the customs hereabouts prevalent; partly on account of its curious distinctness of detail, and the facts connected with it.

The parallelogram of precipitous rock, whence Trebizond derives its name, is separated on its western side from the continuity of the coast by a deep valley, or rather ravine, called Xenos. On its eastern margin rise the lofty, though half-ruined walls of the old fortress, the work of the Comnenian Emperors; while its western brink is overshadowed by the gigantic cypress-trees of a large Turkish burial-ground, where, amid countless tombs of every date, reposes under a heavy cupola the ambitious mother of Sultan Seleem, conqueror of Syria and Egypt. Just without the cemetery enclosure, between it and the Xenos ravine, stands a small "hammam," or warm bath, of the description so common in the East, for the use of the adjoining town-quarter. The suburb, further on, exchanges its name of Xenos for that of Pharos; probably a reminiscence of some old lighthouse which may once have stood on the rocky spur of cliff here jutting out into the sea, and sheltering the shallow harbour once of Hadrian, but now disused; but of such a building no vestige now remains except the name. Immediately behind the bath rises a confused mass of shattered walls and towers, the relics of a Byzantine out-work that formerly guarded the eastern extremity of the bridge by which access is given across the deep ravine to the castle of Trebizond; and all along up the rapid slope and down to the rocky beach, a wilderness of quaint houses and huts, mostly dilapidated, scattered irregularly amidst unpruned orchard-gardens and tall plane trees, with narrow winding paths here and there between high stone walls, neglected fountains, fallen tombstones, among rank hemlock grass, and brier;—such is this very picturesque, but not very lively or enlivening suburb.

Every nook of it is haunted, say the inhabitants, and if their

accounts be worthy of the least credit, the statistics of the disembodied spirits must at least equal those of the flesh-clad ones; but the goblin resort of predilection is, all agree, the "hammam," or bath. This is just as it should be, since the normal condition of public baths in the East is to be haunted: one, for instance, by a black cat of præter-feline proportions—my own groom saw it; another by innumerable long snakes, that wriggle up and down the walls—a young Government clerk is my authority for these; a third by a grim and shadowy negro—the policeman who told me of it had nearly been frightened out of his senses; and so on to the end of the goblin list. In plain fact, the interior of an Asiatic bath, especially at night, and when few people are in it, is eerie enough. There is the large, stone-flagged, high-roofed entrance hall, surrounded by deep recesses and wide galleries; then the vaulted chamber within, dimly lighted from above, and opening out from it the yet gloomier retiring-nooks for secluded bathers; the heavy, steamy air, the damp-mottled walls, the ceaseless plash of the large drops that condense and fall from the vault overhead: everything concurs to produce a feeling of loneliness and depression, and to encourage the fancies consequent on such a state. Then, too, a public bath-house is, even in Mahometan ideas, somewhat of what a theatre or an opera-house may be even now in these latitudinarian days to a strict evangelical, hardly a "proper" place; and this notion, which is unfortunately only too often justified in these regions by corroborative fact, creates a half-anticipation of meeting evil influences there—a dread which chance, solitude, or any other terrifying cause, may occasionally heighten into vision.

How many goblins, and of what precise sort, have been seen in the Xenos hammam, I do not know—the census is yet in its infancy in Turkey—but in the Pharos suburb adjoining, not ten minutes' distance from the ill-famed bath, there yet lives, or at least lived at the time of my writing this, a man of respectable family and condition, married, well-off for means, and under forty years of age; but smitten with premature decrepitude, half-palsied in body, and from time to time wandering also

in mind, incapable alike of business and enjoyment. This wretched condition dates from a night in the bath-house of Xenos six years back, under the circumstances which I will now relate as they were told me by a member of the sufferer's own family: the matter was one of general notoriety in the town.

It was in the Mahometan or lunar month of Sha'aban, which that year corresponded pretty nearly with our December, and which, as preceding the thirty-days' yearly fast of Ramadhan, is in some measure a festive time for the followers of the Prophet, a sort of Carnival before their severe Lent. Osman Kaleeb-Zadeh, to give him his name in full, had sat up one night till rather late in one of the coffee-houses—here the ordinary social resorts—of the quarter, amusing himself, after the fashion of the country, by playing backgammon with a friend of his own age and position, and chatting on the ordinary topics of the time. When the coffee-house had to be closed, a little before midnight, they were the last to leave it; and before parting for the night, they agreed to meet early by the first dawn at the public bath close by, and afterwards to go together into town upon some business which they had arranged in common. Then they separated.

Osman went home and to bed, intending to be up before daybreak and join his friend at the bath. But in the middle of his sleep he was suddenly awakened by a sharp knocking at the door. Getting quickly up and opening it to see what was the matter, he beheld standing outside what he supposed to be his companion of the evening before, with a lantern in his hand. The night was still, warm, and overcast with low misty clouds, as nights often are here during the winter solstice, severe cold and storm rarely setting in before mid-January. "What has brought you here so early?" he asked. "It is not yet near morning." "How so?" replied the other; "the dawn has already broken, only 'tis cloudy and dark. If we do not make haste we shall find the bath crowded with people, and have ever so long to wait for our turn. Besides, the sooner the better: get your things on and come." Hearing all this, Osman supposed that he must have overslept himself, and was really

behind time. So he slipped quietly back into the house, dressed himself, and came out. His friend was still waiting for him, lantern in hand, at the door.

No one else was up and stirring as they passed along the narrow lanes, now doubly dark with overshadowing trees, talking familiarly as they went, till they came out on the little open space close by the coffee-house where Osman had spent the evening, where stands a noble plane-tree, and opposite, beyond, is the low dark entrance of the bath they were going to. But on one side the view opens out across the Xenos ravine to the battlemented walls of the castle opposite; and beyond these again rises high in air the tall stone minaret of a mosque, once a Byzantine church, and now the principal place of Mahometan worship within the limits of the old fortified town.

Here they stopped to breathe the fresh air a moment after the close stifling lanes. It was a murky night. Osman looked east, but there was no hint of dawn there; only the tapering outline of the minaret was traced faintly white against the blackness of the sky. "How far off it looks in the dusk, and how high!" he exclaimed. "Not so very far off, nor so very high neither," said the other, in a strange altered voice, that made his companion start. "Suppose we just light it up—shall I?" And without waiting for an answer, he stretched out his arm, which suddenly lengthened right across the valley before them, the city walls, and the houses beyond, till it reached the minaret, and hung the lantern on the pointed summit, where it remained suspended, glittering like a star in the gloom.

Terrified at the sight, Osman turned to ask—but his companion had vanished, and he was all alone under the plane-tree in the silent night. Without waiting for more, he hurried back as best he might to his own house, entered, and threw himself dressed as he was upon the bed. His wife woke up, and inquired what had happened to him—where he had been. He gave some evasive answer, and then lay quiet, pretending to go to sleep, and wishing for the morning.

Only a few minutes, however, had thus passed, when rap it came at the door again. Osman turned a deaf ear at first; but when the noise was repeated his wife awoke, and, not suspecting what had occurred before, begged her husband to get up and see who was outside. Ashamed to own either his fears or their cause, Osman reluctantly rose, left the room, and opened the house-door. There, sure enough, stood his friend—or the semblance of his friend—lantern in hand, waiting. "Who are you?" asked Osman. The other stared. "Why, do you not know me?" said he. "Were we not playing backgammon together last evening? and did we not agree to go together to the bath this morning? Come along, or we shall be late; the day is breaking." Form, voice, manner, all were those of his friend. Osman felt again ashamed to hint his suspicions; so he determined to put a bold face on it, and accompanied the other into the street.

Before they had gone far he himself learnt to despise his own fears; so thoroughly did the easy and straightforward talk of the one at his side assure him that this time it was no tricky phantom, but a real living "man and brother" beyond a doubt. Still, he refrained from mentioning the incident of an hour before, lest he should be laughed at or disbelieved.

They passed the open place, the plane-tree, and reached the bath. To their surprise—Osman's, at least—its door stood wide open, and the entrance-hall was fully lighted up; yet no one appeared to be moving within; the head bath-keeper's accustomed place was empty; nor did any attendants come forward to meet them. But the bathing-wrappers, towels, and other requisites were all ready put out; some hung up, some lying folded in their proper places; everything was neatly arranged and fit for use. "They must have got the bath in order, and then, finding that nobody came, have turned in again for a nap," said Osman's companion. "Well, till some one awakes, we had best change our dress, and make ourselves comfortable, for the meantime, in the heating-room."

Osman agreed, and the two exchanged their out-of-door dress for the costume ordinary in an Eastern bath, consisting of very

toga-like wrappers, and went into the large vaulted inner room, which was also lighted up and ready warmed. Here they lay down on the raised stone dais against the wall, with the dome-like roof some twenty or twenty-five feet overhead, and the lamp hanging down from it in the centre.

While they thus reclined at ease, waiting till either a servant or some other bather like themselves should enter, Osman, who had no doubts left in his mind as to the real and bodily identity of his companion, could not resist the temptation of recounting to him the previous adventure of the night. So he told how he had been awakened and beguiled out of doors by a phantom exactly resembling in shape and voice the friend now beside him, and how they had almost arrived at the bath, when the spectre betrayed itself for what it really was by the portentous feat already described. The other listened without interrupting the story, with apparent interest, till, when all had been told: "So," he subjoined, "it hung the lantern it was carrying on the top of the big minaret, did it? But do you think it could have managed this?" and, with the words, he lifted a leg and a foot, which suddenly lengthened out just as the arm had done before, and with a kick struck the very highest point of the central vault above them, shattering to pieces the lamp where it hung.

Osman leapt up terrified, as well he might be, and found himself alone in pitch darkness, for every light in the bath had been simultaneously extinguished. However, as he had often been in the building before, and was thoroughly well acquainted with it, he managed, in spite of his trepidation, to find his way to the door, and rushed out, in bathing costume as he was, into the open air, leaving his own clothes, which he did not venture to search after, behind him in the entrance-room. But as he crossed the open space between the coffee-house and the bath he looked back, and, to his horror, saw the dim and distant top of the minaret within the fortress once more lighted up by the spectral lantern hanging there. Chill and trembling, he at last got back to his own house. There he found his wife fast asleep; and much was she surprised when he woke her to see

him so quickly returned, and in such strange attire. He now made a clean breast of it, telling her of all that had happened to him that night from first to last, and adding, that when the day was up he would return to the bath and fetch his clothes from where he had left them.

But hardly had he finished his narration when, to the alarm of both, the same rap that had twice been heard before was repeated outside. Osman's wife, naturally enough, entreated her husband to pay no attention to it. But, like Tam-o'-Shanter in a similar case, he would not take advice:—

> Ah, gentle dames! it gaes me greet,
> To think how monie counsels sweet,
> How monie lengthen'd sage advices,
> The husband frae the wife despises!

"But to our tale." Osman, who was by no means a coward, and whose mettle was now fairly up, swore that he would see the matter out to the end; besides, added he, the dawn must now be near, and it could hardly be a phantom again this time. So he got up, went, in bathing apparel as he still was, to the house-door, and opened it. Sure enough, there stood his friend, or what seemed his friend, waiting. "What is the matter with you," asked the figure, "that you stare so wildly at me? and how come you to be in such a dress?" "My own wearing-clothes are at the bath," replied Osman; and forthwith proceeded to give an account of all that he had seen that night, and how he had been twice spectre-tricked, thinking to himself, "if this time it be a phantom, too, like the others, I may as well provoke it to show its true character at once, before we go further." But his friend, on hearing all this, expressed the utmost astonishment. "Me!" he said; "why I have only this minute left my house, and I was going quietly by myself to the bath, when it occurred to me that I might as well pass by your door, and take the chance of calling you up, in case you might not be awake already. You must have been dreaming somehow. Any way, let us now go at once, and look for your clothes where you have left them, lest anybody else should

come in the meanwhile and take a fancy to them." Once more Osman felt sure that the speaker was his own live neighbour, and no other. So, after a little more parley, they went together, and soon stood before the bath. As before, the outer door was wide open, and the interior of the building brightly lighted up, but neither bath-keeper at the entrance, nor any other living creature. Osman went to the corner where he had first undressed, and there found his clothes lying, untouched and folded, exactly as he had left them. His first impulse was to put them on without delay; but his friend suggested that, as the bath was heated, they might as well make use of it; so the two entered the inner room, there to wait till the ordinary attendants should enter on service.

They sat awhile and talked: no one came. But suddenly a confused noise, like that of a crowd, was heard proceeding from one of the dim corner recesses of the hall. Osman looked that way, but saw nothing; then turning his head back a moment towards his seeming friend, perceived that his face was changed and horrible, and his stature gigantic.

And now from the dark niche whence the sound had been heard, issued a long procession of countless figures—men, women, children, on foot, on horseback, armed, unarmed, soldiers, peasants, townsfolk, with spears, lances, swords, drums, fifes; a mixed multitude, large, small, grotesque, fearful, hideous. They filled the entire place; they swarmed round Osman; they pointed at him, they laughed, they danced, they clamoured, they sung, they played the strangest antics, till in a moment, as the first sharp cry that summons to wakefulness and morning prayer sounded from the minaret gallery of the old mosque outside, they all vanished into nothing; the lights went suddenly out; and Osman, left alone and in darkness, fell fainting on the stone pavement of the floor.

There he remained till he was thus found by the bath-keeper who entered at daylight, and was carried home, still insensible. But before long he recovered consciousness, and told his story; for some hours, even, he seemed none the worse for his spectral adventure. As evening approached, however, fever came on,

and he for several days was like to die: when the crisis had past, it left him paralytic, hopelessly impaired in mind and body, a mere wreck. Such he now continues. His friend, whose semblance the "mocker" had thrice assumed, had never, as they afterwards found, left his house during that fatal night, nor even till late the following morning.

TURKISH GEORGIA.

The following Essay sums up the impressions of not one but several visits, in which duty, so far as I was concerned, coincided with pleasure, made during the years 1867–71 to a land not unjustly designated as the Savoy of the Caucasus. Since then the treaty of 1878 has made over the half in extent, and much more than the half in population and importance, to Russia; with what military or political results for the future I care not here to surmise; but with positive and immediate advantage in the meantime to the inhabitants themselves as individuals, hardly so, it may be, as a nation or race. And here again, gentle reader, "speer nae questions;" you know the rest of the Scottish proverb.

"A HANDSOME but worthless nation." And with these words Gibbon summarily dismisses the Georgians from his pages.

Poor Georgians! With all due respect for the great historian, I cannot but feel inclined to dispute the propriety of the latter epithet he bestows on them, were it even for nothing else than the correctness of the former. Beauty and goodness had once but a single name, common to both in the most copious of all languages, the expression of the noblest of all minds; and Greek philology, like Greek philosophy, however high fantastical at times, had the most often a true foundation deep in the nature of things. Is indeed fair without so often foul within? Or is not the outside form rather more generally a representation, a reproduction indeed, and a consequence of the inner being? There are, I am well aware, many wise adages to imply the contrary; but we may remember that personal beauty, rare, in all truth, even among women, is yet rarer by far among men, the makers of these wise adages; and it is not foxes alone that have called unattainable grapes sour before now.

But to leave generalizations, and return to our Georgians, such as they are this day. Business, whether of the State or not, has made me more than once a looker-on among them, and given me ample opportunity for judging both how far they still deserve their hereditary reputation for physical beauty, and also how far they merit the uncomplimentary adjectives bestowed on them, not only by Gibbon—who from the very vastness of his scope may easily have been obliged to content himself occasionally with comparatively scanty or superficial information on some points—but even by other more special writers.

Large allowance should be made when we sit in judgment on races which, owing more than anything else to a misfortune of geographical position, and the dangerous contiguity of more numerous and more powerful neighbours, have for many ages received and borne a foreign yoke, till its impress, for good or evil, has been fairly stamped into their shoulders. Bad luck may have more to do with the fact and its consequences than bad deserving. It is no blame to Croatia that it is ruled by Austrian administration; nor, if guarantees fail them, could Luxembourg or Belgium be held responsible were they swallowed up by one or other of their conterminal giants. What can a little fish do in the presence of a big one but be eaten by it, and, according to Sydney Smith's wise recommendation, try not to disagree with it?

Now Georgia has for centuries past been that little fish; or, to use a comelier metaphor, an unarmed, fallen, and wounded man, over whose prostrate body Turk and Persian have generation after generation fought their fierce frontier strife, till Russia coming in gave the duel a Midshipman Easy or triangular character. Not, however, an equilateral one, but illustrative rather of the old axiom which sends the weakest to the wall; Persia, undoubtedly the feeblest of the three combatants, having to give up her hold on Georgia altogether, while Turkey, a little—but only a little—stronger, managed to retain a curtailed portion of her prey, of which, however, the lion's share naturally fell to the lion of the partitioners, namely, Russia.

With that larger share, now known as Russian Georgia, I have for the moment nothing to do. It is indeed to its inhabitants that Gibbon's antithetical notice chiefly refers; but they, since the historian's time, have undergone a great change, that of Russification—a process likely in many ways to render them at once less worthless and less handsome, bodily, of course. It is rather of the smaller section I now would speak, that yet included—though for how long to come may well be questioned—within Turkish limits, and hardly at all changed by the lapse of the last century. This is "Gurjistan," or Turkish Georgia, a country rarely visited, and more rarely described; even for the Osmanlees themselves, its present masters, it is all but a "terra incognita," and to that very circumstance it chiefly owes what interest it possesses.

In a misgoverned and declining Empire like that of Turkey, where administration is only another name for fiscal exaction, and where the presence of the ruler is chiefly made known by the diminution and decay of those he rules, the thoughts and investigations of the traveller are apt to be directed to the past rather than to the present, to historical relics rather than to actual life. Palestine explorations, Assyrian excavations, Ephesus diggings, and the like, while they bring to view the splendours of former ages, discover no less the nakedness of the modern land. It is among the dwellings of the dead, not of the living, that men go in quest of monuments and bones. Indeed, of all the vast territories which by the ordinance of fate, and the forbearance of neighbours, own the Sultan's rule, Egypt is perhaps the only one of any importance that has a present to speak of—just because only indirectly weighed on by that rule—and a 'Village Life on the Nile,' or the like, can be read, if not with the same eagerness as a description of the Theban marvels, or the graceful relics of Philæ, yet with tolerable interest. But when we come to Syria, and even more to Anatolia, our view is fixed wholly on the past; and the Ottoman tent, pitched amid the ruins of a score of shattered civilizations, only attracts our eye by its incongruousness with the memories around.

Yet here again some local exceptions may be found: in spots where the Stamboolee footstep has not been deep enough impressed to stamp all life and vigour out of the land; where something still remains of national energy and type to arouse sympathy for the present, and allow hope for the future. One of these is Turkish Georgia, or Gurjistan.

Reference to any atlas will show that the extreme north-eastern horn of the Ottoman Crescent half embraces the Black Sea on its inner edge; while its outer curve rests partly on the newly-defined Russian frontier, partly on the great inland tract that once was Armenia.

The angle thus formed is occupied by Gurjistan—a name expressing the long-maintained nationality of its inhabitants.

It is a noble region: few more so. Lofty mountains, granite the most, intersected by deep and well-watered valleys; vast and virgin forests of oaks, beech, chestnut, ash, pine, and fir, all of luxuriant, often colossal growth; great sweeps of rich pasture-land; flower-enamelled meadows, jotted with great trees, and overhung by peaks and precipices beyond the imaginings of a Salvator Rosa; while the thunder of the waterfall mixes with the ceaseless roar of the full torrent from below; the beauty of Savoy and the grandeur of the Alps in one. Wherever the soil is cultivated—scratched, I might say—there springs up from it a half-wild abundance of crops and fruit, corn, barley, maize, vines, orchard-growth; while the frequent traces of ancient but abandoned mines—what is not abandoned under Ottoman rule?—bear witness to the wealth of metal, copper, zinc, iron, lead, and silver, beneath the surface. Snow lies on the towering peaks of Karkhal Dagh, near the sea, and of Kel Dagh, close to the Russian frontier, each of them above twelve thousand feet in height, all the year round; while in the garden-like valleys of Liwaneh and Showshet, immediately below them, the apricot and the peach ripen, and the clustering vines only need a more skilful care to rival those of Burgundy or Central Italy. Rice-fields and mulberry groves, where silk is reared, line the river-courses.

Such is the country through which I wandered for several

summer weeks, unrestrained in the liberty of my way by the prescription of roads, for the best of all reasons, that not a single road exists here; and the tracks, even where undeservedly dignified by the name of horse-paths, are all as nearly as possible like each other in roughness, steepness, narrowness, and every other unroadlike quality. Indeed, for about half our rambles we had to lead our horses by the bridle: as keeping on their backs while at such angles and along such razor-edges as we continually had to traverse was out of the question.

But before we lose ourselves in the mountain labyrinth, let us halt a little under these green spreading walnut trees by the rushing waterfall among the rocks, and do introductory honour to the Muse of our time, Her of statistics, or at least of precision and detail.

Of the three districts which compose the main of Gurjistan, one, that of Liwaneh, lies along the lower valley of the Great Chorok stream, the Harpasus of Arrian; it is the only one which enjoys the honour of possessing a town, the town of Artween, which, with its eleven hundred houses, besides baths and mosques, but no schools, clings to the rapid hill-side slope leading down to the river, exactly at the point where it first becomes navigable for boats, some fifty miles distant from the sea. The other two districts, Showshet and Ajarah, lie further east, the former inland, the latter approaching the coast. Two smaller tracts, Keskeem by name and Chorok-Soo, belonging, the one to Liwaneh, the other to Ajarah, complete Gurjistan proper, which numbers in all about four hundred villages, and two hundred thousand inhabitants, male and female. Whosoever desireth more information of the kind, is it not written in the Book, the Blue Book of Consular Reports? Seek, and it will be found.

"A race of men"—I quote once more from Gibbon—"whom nature has cast in her most perfect mould, is degraded by poverty, ignorance, and vice." For the inhabitants of Turkish Georgia this is only too true; yet, situated as they are, it could hardly be otherwise.

Poor, ignorant, vicious, handsome Georgians! I am fond of

them, and cannot help being so; good-looking, that they certainly are, men, women, and children, in no ordinary degree; a fair, bright-complexioned, light-haired, long-haired race, tall, lithe, and with all the mountaineer grace of bearing; cheerful, too, conversible, sociable, though wild, careless, out-of-elbows, lawless, scapegrace; yet such as have evidently in them the making of much better things, had they only a chance. But of all the hundred and one nationalities under the Ottoman incubus which has a chance? The best off are those who are the most left to themselves; and who in consequence, if they do not grow richer, do not at any rate grow much poorer: if they do not get better, do not either get considerably worse.

Their dress is very characteristic. It is a mountain dress, admirably adapted to the country they live in; trowsers loose above, but tight-fitting as garters below the knee to the ankle; and light open jackets, fancifully embroidered and braided; the ordinary colour vandyke brown; the stuff itself home-made, warm, and strong. Their linen, too, is home-made; every cottage has a small patch of flax belonging to it. Turbans are unknown: the head is covered by a cloth hood, of the same material as the jacket, with two long pendant strips on either side, which at need are folded across the chest and round the neck, forming an excellent "comforter" in cold weather; in warm, they are wrapped round the hood itself, so as to give additional protection against the heat of the sun. Hood and strips are decorated with simple braid, silver, or gold, as the age, or circumstances, or vanity of the wearer may direct. Round his waist every Georgian wears a leather belt, often curiously worked with brass or silver, from which hang a gourd-shaped powder-flask, silver mounted, a little brass bottle, containing oil for the gun-lock, a complicated cord or thong, said to be for binding possible captives, but as useful in many other ways as a schoolboy's ball of twine; and in the girdle are invariably stuck a long double-edged knife or dagger, and one or two huge silver-adorned pistols. In the hand or over the shoulder is a single-barrelled gun, long, bright, brass-mounted, with a flint lock; this the Georgian never fails to carry with him, and to

make good use of, for he is an excellent shot, and hares, wild goats, and other game, are plenty in the mountains.

Very picturesque, too, and curious are the Georgian dwellings. Nominally classed in villages, but in fact a loose aggregate of detached cottages, the existence of a hamlet can only be surmised from a greater frequency of patches of cultivation amid the predominant scrub, two or three springs and running channels of crystal-clear water, and, somewhere or other within a circuit of a few miles, a group of walnut trees, and under its shelter a large square wooden building, the sides resembling an exaggerated bird-cage, the eaves and porticos outpassing in their exuberance those of any Chinese temple; the whole being a mosque, but reduced to its most simple expression, without minaret, apse, or adjunct, except a few wooden benches or trunks of trees laid horizontally near the entrance, the ordinary meeting-place of council or gossip. The houses, too, are like the mosque in their copiousness of porches, open galleries, and overhanging roof-eaves, a style of architecture suggested by the only building material now used, wood, from the foundation posts in the ground, to the wooden shingles that do duty for tiles on the roof.

This was not, however, always the case; for the whole district is jotted over high and low with the ruins of stone-built churches and castles, belonging to former times. Not Byzantine in character, the Georgian architecture, whether ecclesiastical or secular, comes much nearer to the later Roman, as we see it in Southern Europe, and looks as if it had been first borrowed directly from those models, and afterwards developed itself with certain peculiarities of its own.

Thus, for instance, one of the Georgian castles, that which guards the passage of the Chorok river at a place called Gonieh, is absolutely Roman in outline; so much so that the best idea I can give of it is, by comparing it with the camp-ruins of Garionnonnon, now called Borough Castle, in Suffolk. Like it, the long lines of wall, some twenty feet in height, and from five to six in thickness, enclose an open square of about a hundred yards each way; only the materials, instead of being

alternate layers of rough stone and brick, are here stone only, but united by a cement little or not at all inferior to that of Italo-Roman use. The towers, too, squat and almost solid, four on each side, besides those, somewhat larger and higher, at the angles, are square instead of round, and in height slightly overtop the wall. Four gates; and over the principal one, to the west, a Georgian inscription, which my ignorance disqualified me from deciphering; though for this the villagers consoled me by saying that it was not the original one, which had been defaced by Sultan Seleem, when he conquered country and castle near four centuries ago, but of recent date, and put there by some private hand not long since. But a more palpable imitation of a Roman fortified camp than this stronghold I never saw.

Much more mediæval in appearance, with its broken battlements, narrow loopholes, bartizans, and fragments of high towers, is the important fortress of Chikanzir, to give it the Georgian name which has superseded the more euphonious Iris of Arrian's time, where it frowns from its lofty storm-beaten cliff on the same line of defence further east. Tradition ascribes it, as it does the majority of the many castles in the neighbourhood, to Queen Tamar, a legendary heroine, said to have ruled over Georgia in the twelfth century, and who here, we are told, took refuge when flying from the Byzantine arms, and made a brave and successful stand. History does not, I believe, confirm these details; but, which is much more to the point in popular estimation, the foot-print of Queen Tamar herself does. In fact, at the base of the coast-cliff, and occasionally washed by the sea when a strong westerly gale drives up its heaped waters on the shore, I was shown, on a huge granite slab, deep imbedded in the sand, the impress, clearly defined, of a naked human foot, long and delicate like that of a woman, but deeply indented, and of darker colour than the rest of the stone. A curious freak of nature. Others will have it that it is the miraculous memorial of a Greek or Georgian priest fleeing from Mahometan persecution; while zealous Mahometans, not to be so outdone, claim it a relic of some nameless saint of their creed, who by the efficacy of his

preachings converted the neighbourhood to Islam. So all unite in venerating it; and I myself, who have seen the impress of imagined footsteps on the Mount of Ascension, on the Sakhrah of the Mosque-transformed Temple, on the pavement of the Roman "Domine quo vadis" near the gate of San Sebastiano, and others, can bear witness that this one of Queen Tamar, though by no means the most celebrated, is by far the best of its kind among them all, and certainly not the least authentic.

Between those two constructional styles, the earlier or Roman, and the later or mediæval Georgian, are here found several, so to speak, transition castles, not unlike in general plan to those called Lombard in Northern Italy. Here the principal feature is a huge square, or slightly oblong tower, fifty or sixty feet in height; the walls are massive, and pierced with small square holes, and a window or two; the summit crowned with large battlements. The materials are stone, partly hewn and partly rough, with cement of a quality inferior to that used in the earlier buildings. Wherever the tower is not rendered inacces sible by the steepness of the rock on which it is built, out-works, divided into courts inner and outer, are added; the walls are low and thick. The castle entrance is always near an angle, and double, leading by a winding passage into the courts, but the keep itself has often no door; the only admittance being a window from which a ladder, ten or more feet in length, could be let down or drawn up at will. Indeed, in one of the finest specimens of this kind, which I visited among the wild mountains of Hamsheen, where the Georgian frontier touches that of the kindred, but hostile, Mingrelian province of Lazistan, I found that the entire castle, keep, out-works and all, could only be approached by a break-neck scramble over a couple of fir-trunks, cast by the peasants across a chasm in the rock where once a drawbridge, now long since vanished, had probably been. The donjon tower was in this instance about seventy feet high, and eighteen square; its position on a giant pinnacle of rock, piercing from among the dense woods around, while the torrent river foamed and roared hundreds of feet below, was grand beyond description. But no tradition attaches to the castle, nor

could I discover any commemorative inscription; its date is attested by the style alone.

Smaller castles, too, of what may loosely be called the feudal type, abound in Gurjistan, built at different periods by the semi-independent Emeers, or Princes, as it is the fashion to translate a title much better rendered by "baron," and some of comparatively recent date. These half dwelling-places, half fortresses, which in general appearance bear a certain family resemblance to the ruined strongholds of the Rhine, are to be found everywhere perched each on its abrupt or isolated height at the entrance of some valley, or overhanging a narrow defile; their form is picturesquely irregular; their battlemented walls, turret and tower, more remarkable for massiveness of construction than for architectural or engineering skill. Strange apocryphal legends are attached to most, and "Kiz-kaleh," or the "Maiden's Tower," is a common appellation. One such, which attracted my notice by the unusually elegant proportions of its lofty keep, had long, I was told, been occupied by an Amazonian princess—women figure conspicuously in Georgian stories—who, finding herself hard pressed by savage besiegers, and having lost the greater part of her garrison, stipulated for the lives of the remainder; and then ordering the gates of the castle to be flung open, cast herself headlong from the battlements into the abyss below, rather than incur the dangers peculiar to a captive of her sex. Name and date, of course, not given. More ferocious, but unfortunately more historical, are the tales told of the grim ruins where the round watch-tower of Artween castle looks down over a sheer precipice of nine hundred feet perpendicular to the rushing waters of the Chorok below. Here, scarce a century back, a savage chief established himself, whose delight it was to force his prisoners to leap from the topmost turret into the abyss. Poetical justice—let us hope justified in this instance by fact—represents this Georgian Adretz as receiving in turn a similar treatment from the vengeance of his Turkish captors.

But rich as Gurjistan is in architectural monuments of this class, it is singularly poor in relics of ecclesiastical buildings. Most of the churches hereabouts seem to have been, like the

mosques of the present day, either constructed wholly of wood or at least roofed with that material, and thus to have disappeared almost simultaneously with the religion that they represented. Here and there a colony of Armenian monks—for of Georgian monks and ascetics we find no trace, probably they were as rare under the old symbol as Georgian Mollahs and Muftis are under the new; nations change their creed more readily than their character—had established themselves, and have left some specimens of their not ungraceful nor undignified art; but of Georgian churches proper, I do not think that more than a dozen ruins are to be seen throughout the entire region. Four or five of these I explored, and in each the apse, or east end, alone still was or had been vaulted roughly enough; the nave or body of the building had evidently been covered with timber. The arch, where it occurs, is generally pointed; the scant ornamentation on the door-posts or round the windows consists of shallow-carved Runic knots, or a conventional vine-pattern. What, however, distinguishes these Georgian churches, such as they are, from any others with which I am acquainted in the East, is a square belfry tower, forty or fifty feet high, placed at, and united with, the west end, while the principal entry, contrary to Greek usage, is on one side of the edifice, so that the whole bears a strong likeness to an old village Norfolk or Suffolk church. Belfry-towers are rare things throughout the East, but when they do occur they are always, except in Gurjistan, separated altogether from the main building, like the famous Campanile of Florence. A fine example of the kind is afforded by the Byzantine church, now a Mosque, of St. Sophia, at Trebizond, the work of the Emperor Manuel I. in the thirteenth century, where the square tower, with its open lantern a-top, is full seventy feet in height, and stands at a distance of forty paces from the western porch.

Of the process by which this numerous, amiable, and fairly intelligent population was severed from Christendom and incorporated into Islam, no record remains. This much is certain: that a hundred and fifty years ago, according to their own statement, and even later, I should think, judging by the com-

parative freshness of the church ruins in a climate where damp, heavy rains and snow, and a vegetation rivalling the luxuriance of Yucatan conspire to hasten the work of disintegration and decay, they were all Christians. It is equally certain that at the present day they are all without exception Mahometans. No compulsion, no invasion even, is either mentioned in history, or alluded to by tradition; and what is stranger still, no extension of the Turkish Empire was then taking place eastward; on the contrary, it was rather losing ground. Could the dread of Russian encroachment, first felt along the northern Georgian frontier about that time, have driven these tribes to seek closer alliance and protection with the Turks by means of religious union? Possibly their Christianity sat as lightly on them then as their Mahometanism does now. They themselves have a story that a very eloquent preacher and holy man came among them, and converted them all to Islam by his sermons. "Nonsense," said I to a young Georgian beg, who had told me the tale with a very creditable amount of gravity, "that can never have been the cause. You know as well as I do that no Christian becomes a Mahometan, or *vice versâ*, except it be from fear of imminent danger, or hope of material advantage. In the absence of these, the finest sermons would convert nobody; and as to proofs and miracles, you are aware that they are as copious in Christian as in Mahometan story, or more." He laughed, and answered, "Of course there was some motive of the other kind, but of what it was we have no record left."

In fact, for about fourteen centuries, from the days of Chosrœs and Justinian, down to our own time, this mountain group has resembled an island, round which the eddying waves of frontier war have raged almost without ceasing, but which they have never wholly overflowed. Byzantines and Persians, Turcomans and Byzantines, Turks and Persians again, Russians and Turks, have all fought around them, retreated, or conquered; while they, secure in their almost inaccessible labyrinth of ravine and crag, have taken no more share in the strife around, than by making or repelling an occasional foray; and, when victory had declared itself for the one or the other of their

belligerent neighbours, paying as little tribute and obedience as possible to their new suzerain, whoever he might be.

To the Osmanlee Sultan, the "Padishah" of the Mahometan world, so long as he was content to rule them after their own fashion, that is, through the medium of their own born chiefs and begs, the Georgian Muslims were at first attached with proper neophytic fervour. Of this they gave repeated proof during the many wars, or, one might almost say, the one long war, which from the close of the last century to the middle of this, burned or smouldered along the land-line, and ended by giving the entire Southern Caucasus, with its fair plains adjoining, to Russian dominion. All this time the Mahometan Georgians further on the south and west kept up a guerilla warfare, less ferocious, but hardly less persistent, than that maintained by the Circassian tribes on the east and north. But when the Ottoman Government changed its type from semi-feudal to bureaucratic, and adminstration merged in mere organised fiscal extortion, with the governing Pashas and other Stamboolee officials for its agents, the old spell of loyalty was broken, and Georgian eyes are now more often and more longingly turned to Tiflis than to Constantinople.

Indeed, without a degree of provincial tact which a pseudo-centralised government can hardly be expected to possess, this state of things was, sooner or latter, inevitable. From the noblest beg to the meanest peasant there is hardly a Georgian who has not relations, or at least clansmen, under Russian rule across the frontier, with whom he is in constant correspondence of visits made and returned, and from whom he learns the transterminal existence of a state of prosperity and progress which he cannot but feel contrasts bitterly with the poverty and ignorance to which he himself, the Osmanlee subject, is condemned. For, in spite of frontier-guards, passport regulations, and military "cordon," mutual intercourse between Russian Georgia and Turkish Gurjistan is constant and intimate; nor does difference of creed, or, officially speaking, of nationality, much impair the sympathy of a common origin. "Blood is thicker than water" with the clansmen of Asia

Minor as with the clansmen of the Scottish Highlands. It is amusing enough to see, as I often have, a Russianised Georgian, in big clumsy boots, long-skirted coat, and dirty forage-cap, enter the rickety but carpeted divan of a Mahometan kinsman, who in the much more picturesque, but less civilised-looking dress of Asiatic fashion, rises to embrace him. It is Burns's Cæsar and Luath over again; and there is no want of cordiality or respect on either side.

Meanwhile the attachment of the peasantry—the devotion would be an exacter word—to their own hereditary chiefs or begs, though shorn of their feudal rank and mulcted of their ancestral lands, is strong as ever; indeed, the measures taken by the Ottoman Government to weaken it, have had a contrary effect, by supplying a new tie between nobles and people—that of common dissatisfaction. Both classes have certainly a sufficiently long list of grievances against their black-coated Stamboolee masters, whose conduct is such that it can often be only explained by a settled determination to alienate the affections of these frontier tribes, and to drive them straight into the arms of Russia, who, for her part, is ready enough to receive them.

A Georgian beg, one of the most influential in the land, and chief of an important border clan, had, after much brave guerilla fighting against the Russians in '55, at last thrown himself, with several of his followers, into the besieged fortress of Kars, and did his duty manfully in its defence. When, after the events with which all are familiar, the place surrendered to famine, the beg—I purposely abstain from names—and his men became, of course, prisoners of war with the rest. Thus they remained four or five days; but when the time came for marching the captured garrison off to Tiflis, or other secure places in the Caucasus, the Georgians were simply and unconditionally set free; the Russian general declaring, with a polite generosity that might have been a useful lesson to some other generals nearer home, in a more recent war, that his hostilities regarded the regular troops only; and that the beg and his clansmen being irregular, he held them non-combatants, like any other peaceable inhabitants of the Turkish Empire, and consequently not liable

to the penalties of war. With this he dismissed them, disarmed of course, but not even under parole, to go home, or wherever else they might think best.

The policy, as well as the humanity of this conduct is evident enough; but it is difficult to perceive either the humanity or the policy of the Turkish Government, which, as soon as the war was over, rewarded the beg's services by a fine and imprisonment, on the ground that he must have been in treasonable correspondence with the Russians, otherwise he would not have met with such lenient treatment at their hands.

"Upon my word," said the beg to me, "had I been minded to betray the country to the Russians, I should have had no need of underhand doings: for there was not a man among the villagers who did not wish it, and I do not think the Turks could have done much to hinder us just then. But after all," he continued, "I have reason to be more satisfied with the Turks than with the Russians; for the former, at least, by shutting me up in prison, paid me the compliment of showing that they considered me a person of some consequence; whereas, I never felt so small in my life as when the Russian general told me to go free, without doing me the honour of sending me under guard to Tiflis, and evidently implied that he did not care either for my having fought against him, or whether I might not fight again in the future."

Let us pay this very same gentleman—nobleman I mean—a visit, and see how he lives in the meanwhile.

It is mild summer, and the beg has left his winter residence in the thick woods, some twelve miles distant from the Russian frontier, and has gone, as his wont is, to pass the hotter months of the year under canvas amid the mountain pastures beyond the pine range, where at the height of between eight and nine thousand feet above the sea—his winter house is at the moderate elevation of four thousand—he looks after his numerous herds, and holds a kind of open court, much frequented by all the chiefs from the districts around, far and near. We, his visitors, are a large party, begs, aghas, and "delikans," or "wild-bloods," *i.e.* dashing young bachelors, some pure Georgian, others half-

Georgian, half-Turcoman, by race. As we ride up the steep grassy slopes I notice, at a height of more than seven thousand feet, where even the July air blows keenly, and where no peasant now would venture to winter it from October to April, the ruins, or traces rather, of two large villages, and a stone church, an indication amongst, I regret to say, many similar, that the climate of these regions—as, I believe, of some other longitudes—has gradually but notably cooled during the last few centuries; though whether from a general diminution of solar heat, according to Professor Thomson's alarming theory, to culminate in the realization of Byron's ghastly dream, or whether owing to some transpositions of land and sea in our Northern hemisphere, to take Lyell's more consolatory view of the matter, I do not pretend to decide.

At last we have reached the top; the brisk air, so different from that of the heated valleys below, has in a manner intoxicated our horses, who, instead of showing weariness after so hard a climb, are squealing, neighing, rearing, bounding; it is all the riders can do to hold them in. Before us spreads a wide undulating table-land; it reaches for miles and miles away, till it slopes off eastward into Russian Georgia, and westward sinks in the hollow of Showshet, where dwell the loveliest but not the austerest women, and the handsomest but not the most virtuous men of Georgian race. Far north, its downward dip is clothed with forest to the fever-stricken coast of the Black Sea. But right in front of us is a tent, large and black, with three or four smaller tents on a row behind; these are evidently for women, attendants, and domestic life, while the large one is the "salamlik," or general parlour, of the beg himself. Close by a little granite ridge cuts knife-like through the turf; and from under it wells out a spring of water, crystal clear and icy cold.

The beg, whose ancestral possessions equal in extent Lincolnshire at least, and whose word even now, let who may be the official governor, is law over the whole frontier land, rises and comes forward to greet his guests. What a splendid head he has. I have seen something of the kind among the demigods of Greco-Roman sculpture. Advancing age has deprived his form

of the supple activity which gave it a grace remarkable even among Georgians in youth, but has hardly diminished his passion for horsemanship and every form of bodily exercise. To this he adds a degree of mechanical skill that a trained workman might envy. For one friend he himself, unassisted, manufactures a beautifully-wrought sabre, blade, and hilt; for another a pair of pistols; for a third a silver-mounted clarionet. Then he sets to work on the construction of a sailing-boat, and when it is finished, sails it on a cruise of discovery all over the great mountain lake of Childer, close by, sounding everywhere to determine what the real depth of the water, commonly said to be unfathomable (but he found it, as he told me, twenty-seven fathoms at most), may be; and whether the traditional city, said to be submerged beneath, is really there. Besides these amusements come farming, building, planting, sheep-breeding, cattle-tending, horse-rearing, and even—in which he has done wonders—road-making: and yet, various as these occupations are, the result falsifies the common saying about such attempts, by proving him master, not of none, but of all. Lastly, he is—be the nominal Governor of Osmanlee creation who he may—the ultimate tribunal of appeal throughout the whole eastern half of Gurjistan; the arbiter of disputes, director of councils, social and political head of the little nation.

Begs and not-begs, noble, gentle, or simple, we are seated in the tent; its hangings are of silk, beautifully embroidered, and still bright in colour, the youthful labour of the chief's aunt, who died a few years since at the respectable age of ninety, or thereabouts. Coffee is served round for form's sake; then wine, spirits, and a sort of fruit-luncheon appear; and with a remark that "a tent is liberty-hall, and there is nothing to hinder our enjoying ourselves as we choose," the beg sets the example of jollity in word and deed. In rush half-a-dozen children, four boys and two girls, one of the latter a real beauty, their ages between fifteen and five; these are the younger ones of the beg's numerous family; the elder sons are looking after the farms elsewhere. The biggest of the boys here present, a fair, curly-headed lad, takes up at his father's orders a book of

Persian poetry, and begins translating it off into fluent Turkish: I hope the version is a correct one; if not, I cannot rectify it. Two other pretty boys perform a clarionet duet, on instruments of their father's making, selecting an English air—at least they tell me it is one—in my honour; while the smallest imp turns somersets, stands on his head, and goes through other gymnastic feats. The girls sit on their father's knees, or tease such of the guests as they are familiar with. Other visitors drop in, some on business, some on amusement; the day goes merrily by. But before the last slant sunbeams have died off the height, a huge wood fire is lighted before the entrance of the tent, a necessary precaution against the keen cold outside; a plentiful supper is served, and drinking, with talk and music, resumed till midnight. Georgian Mahometanism is not very deep in the grain; besides, the event, coming sooner or later, of Russian annexation, has already cast its shadow before.

Yet our host, and several others now under the same canvas, fought bravely, and adventured freely the lives which many of their kinsmen lost, on the Turkish side, fifteen years ago. Now not one of them would draw a sword. "We mean to look on and enjoy the fun," say they, when questioned as to the part they would take were another war to break out between the empires. Perhaps this might not really prove their line of conduct, if put to the test, for men do not always keep to what they have forecast when the crisis actually comes; but there is no doubt that these words do very correctly sum up their present feeling.

Indeed, it would be hard to say why they should think or feel differently. The Ottoman Government has taken away their past, and offers them no hopeful future. Besides, how abstain from comparing their own condition with that of their kinsmen on the other side of the frontier close at hand? The contrast is suggestive and seductive in one.

"Well, about myself I do not care so much," says the beg, as after long talk we sat, surrounded by horizontal sleeping figures in the red glare of the heaped wood embers by the door; "my career has pretty well wound itself up; but what on earth am I

to do with these boys of mine? The estate is not much, hardly enough as matters go for the elder ones; the rest would become mere peasants, no better than those around them. Trade? That is not in our line; we know nothing about it; besides, there is none here of any kind. The army? The navy? You know what the average run of officers is in the Ottoman service; besides, my children, because they are mine, would be ill looked on, suspected, kept back in every way. How even am I to give them a decent education? Where put them to school? At Constantinople? I would rather see them dead than exposed to the chance, the certainty, of the taint of Osmanlee vice in that city. And if not at Constantinople, where? You will allow," he concluded, with a kind of laugh, "that the position of a Georgian noble in the Turkish Empire is a pleasant one, very."

As with the chiefs, so with the people, in their degree. And it is for this reason that I have dwelt somewhat at length on the fortunes, ways, and words of an individual; because, with no great modification, they are not merely personal, but general; and one may, to a certain extent, be taken as sample of all.

The Georgians are fond of agricultural labour of every kind, and skilful at it; and with a temperate climate, averaging that of central Italy, and a fertile soil, there is nothing—except the fatal administrative blight, that renders all landed property in Turkey unproductive and almost valueless—to hinder Gurjistan from rivalling or even excelling the corn-bearing fruitfulness of Imeritia and the gardens of Kutais. But what most distinguishes them is their skill in handicraft. Guns, pistols, swords, daggers, embroidery, silver-work, the staple articles of manufacture among a semi-barbarous people—for all these Georgia holds the first rank in the Anatolian market; and the primitive simplicity of the tools employed enhances the cunning of the worker's hand. Pity that it should not oftener occupy itself with more useful objects; but this defect, rightly understood, is not so much attributable to the artificers as to their surroundings. On the other hand, for trade and commerce the Georgians show no aptitude, not even for shopkeeping; and the few shops—I

do not think there are two hundred, all told, throughout the villages—in Gurjistan are invariably kept by strangers, mostly Armenians, who come for a few summer months of speculative profit, and then go away again.

Nor have they—and this is of good augury for their prospects of civilisation—any turn for a pastoral life; their flocks and herds are indeed numerous enough on the grassy mountain slopes, but they are invariably tended by hired Koordes. The Georgians have many of the instincts of a settled, none of those proper to a nomad race.

Social, fond of dress and show, of song and dance, of gatherings and merry-makings, of drink, too, and, I regret to say, of gambling, they are but indifferent, though proselyte Mahometans, and the Islamitic "revival," so marked in its increasing intensity among the Arab, the Indian, and, to a certain extent, among the Turkish and Turcoman races, has little or no existence in Gurjistan. Perhaps too they feel the eventuality of reunion under Russian sway to their Christian kinsmen across the border, too near a probability to allow of much zeal for, so far as they in particular are concerned, the decaying fortunes of Islam. "We ourselves shall live and die Mahometans, but our children may become whatever suits them best," is a common saying among them. It is also, so far as I know, peculiar to them among Muslims; certainly, I never heard the like of it elsewhere. The few Mollas, Muftis, and the like in Gurjistan villages are, like the shopkeepers from without, generally from the more serious sea-coast of Lazistan, or the bigoted neighbourhood of Trebizond.

Of Georgian morality, in the strict sense of the word, "Least said" is, I fear, "soonest mended." Little indeed, among a people so situated, could be looked for, and little is to be found. While the men are habitually out in the fields, or clambering the tall beech-trees to look after their favourite bee-hives—the honey of Gurjistan is first-rate—niched high up in some forked branch among the pale green shades, the women at home have it all their own way, and it is too often the broad one. Not rarely, too, these what we may charitably term faults,

coming in collision with justly aroused jealousy, result in tragic crime. Many instances, needless to repeat here, were told me. In one village an entire family had been exterminated: in another, the brothers of the faithless wife, after fatally avenging the family disgrace, had turned brigands. This feature of Georgian character has, however, not only its black, but, such is human nature, its brighter side; a rank weed crop may give hope of a fruitful soil beneath; a polished marble slab more often covers dry bones only.

Besides, law there is none to speak of, and every man, every man-child even, is armed. Schools, too, except a very few—a dozen at most throughout the whole breadth of the land—of the most primary kind, do not here exist, and there are no teachers in Gurjistan but Need and Passion, no lessons taught but the spade, the sickle, the loom, the forge, the knife, and the ever-loaded gun. As for Government—the official or Ottoman Government, I mean—it recognises no obligation towards its Georgian subjects, except that of taxing them, and collecting their taxes; a difficult task the last, it must be allowed, in mountains like these, where armed collectors have generally to be sent for the work, a work from which they do not always return.

It is easier to pull down than to build up, to destroy than to restore. Latter-day Sultans have broken the links, clumsy ones it must be admitted, yet effective, which bound society together under the semi-feudal authority of the local begs, and have substituted nothing but tax-gatherers and tithe-collectors in their stead. Only in out-of-the-way frontier districts like Gurjistan, far from Constantinople, and almost inaccessible to the official Effendee tribe, something of the old administration yet lingers on, powerless for good, powerful for evil. Shorn of lands, wealth, title, and except what the habitual respect of the peasants may still secure him, position, a Georgian beg is much too weak to compel order, though often strong enough to excite disturbance; enforce the law he cannot, break it he can, and does. Hereditary rivalries, village feuds, robberies, kidnapping, murders, all have here, as chance or circumstance may direct,

almost unrestrained scope; the Ottoman or Stambool Government cannot put them down, and there is no other authorised power left to do it. In fact, when one wanders through these thicket-tangled paths, deep glens, lonely defiles, and dark forests, one wonders, not that deeds of violence and blood are sometimes done, but that they are not more frequent; not that Gurjistan travelling is considered venturesome, but that it is possible.

This is, however, chiefly among the natives themselves; a stranger has little to fear, a European least of all. The hospitality given—and it is always to be had for the asking—in one hamlet usually implies a kind of safe-conduct as far as the next, and so on to the end of the journey; and European wayfarers in particular are covered with the ægis of a salutary fear of after-inquiries, and penalties all the more dreaded because unknown.

In fact, during my long rovings in Gurjistan proper, my own personal experience only records one adventure of the robber or brigand class; I mean, in which I fell in with such. It was in the Ajarah region, the wildest corner of this wild land; and if I record it, I do so because the situation, though it was not exactly pleasant at the moment, was intensely picturesque; so picturesque, indeed, as almost to neutralise any disagreeable sensations that the incident might otherwise have caused.

The valley was such a lovely one; high mountain walls towering up to the sky in a mass of fir and beech above, and thick undergrowth below, all in the fullest, brightest leafage of summer, but now darkening with the first transparent shadows of a calm summer evening, and the rapid twilight of the South. The path, narrow and rough, led alongside of a torrent, till it came to a corner round a jutting mass of rock, where another large and deep mountain stream crossed it from the right, while between precipice and water a clump of huge walnut trees spread out their wide branches, and deepened the gloom of the glen. A spot of exquisite beauty; but one in which it would be awkward to fight, and impossible to try running away.

We had yet half an hour or so to go before we could reach the village where we intended halting for the night; but,

enchanted with the scene around, I was riding slowly, with an armed attendant, a Trebizondian, in front, and a couple of negroes, with a native peasant, to bring up the rear. Just as we turned the rock, the thought struck me, "What a splendid post for an ambush!" and at the same instant my horse—a Turcoman bay—started, snuffed uneasily about him, and would have stopped; I urged him forward, but with difficulty. Suddenly two men, dressed in country cloth of that vandyke-brown colour which of all others is the least distinguishable at a distance among open-air objects, started up right in front, each presenting a shining long-barrelled gun, while two others simultaneously appeared, like toy figures set loose by a spring, from among the bushes alongside, and a third pair as promptly took post on the further bank of the torrent opposite, thus making six long guns, and all levelled, not to mention knives and pistols, of which each man had a pretty little arsenal in his girdle.

One of the men, a fine tall young fellow, as indeed they all seemed, came up to my Trebizondian guard in advance, and took hold of his bridle; another approached me, but observing that I put my hand on a knife in my belt, fell back; perhaps he thought I was going to draw a pistol, which would certainly have been the better weapon, but in fact I had none about me. However, the Trebizondian had, only he was too much frightened to use it, and, like a fool and a coward as he was, began to parley. This of course encouraged the would-be robbers, who now closed in, and matters began to look serious, when my two negroes, who now came up from behind the rock, perceiving that something was wrong, spurred forward, one with a pistol in hand, the other with a large drawn knife, and shouted out so savagely, that the Georgians, taken by surprise, fell back. We were now four—five indeed, reckoning our peasant guide, but he, though armed, seemed inclined to keep out of the way, a friendly neutral, of all characters the most provoking to combatants. However, three of us had arms ready, and appeared to be inclined to use them; the Trebizondian, too, began to pluck up heart, and grow fierce. Hereon our assailants gave it up, and

retired into the thicket, leaving the ford open. That they might better see how little account we made of them, I called to them to stop, and asked how far it was yet to such and such a village, and whether we were on the right way. Two of them turned round, with villainously sulky faces, then thought better of it, and saying, "All right, not far on," hurried off after their companions. By this time night was setting in, and in a few minutes more it was quite dark. Fortunately some peasants of the hamlet having heard somehow or other of our approach, came to meet us with flaring pine-torches, and piloted us to our lodgings, which else we might have had some difficulty in finding.

"It was all a mistake; if the lads had known who you were they would never have meddled with you," was the apologetic remark of our host that night. I think he was right: anyhow, though I remained a fortnight more scrambling up and down the Ajarah glens, and fell in with plenty of armed peasant bands, none of them again formed themselves into so scenic a group as that which gave such a peculiarly Georgian character to that wild valley in the still summer twilight.

Too much stress, however, should not be laid on defects which are accidental in a people, and the result rather of circumstances than of inherent disposition. An ill-governed frontier will seldom be found free from brigandage; nor can much respect to law be expected where law is, in a general way, equally unpromulgated and unenforced. To revert, not for proof's sake, but illustration, to a simile already employed, the very abundance of the weed-growth in the Georgian character seems to warrant the hope of a fruitful and better crop, were the soil properly tilled and guarded. Something of the kind—much, indeed, by comparison—has already taken place in the neighbouring and kindred Russo-Georgian provinces of Imeritia and Gourul. And could the great and kindly historian of the 'Decline and Fall' have added personal acquaintance with the inhabitants of Turkish Gurjistan to historical research, he would, I think, while confirming the epithet of "handsome," have, with me, effaced, or at least qualified, that of "worthless."

Indeed, though certainly little disposed to close with the invitation—one so often made in half-savage countries, and to me always most melancholy, because like the vague clutch of the drowning man at less than a straw—to remain and take up my abode among them, yet when I quitted the Georgians and their land it was with something of regret, and more of pity. Fortune has used them hardly in the past, and their future is at best doubtful. In 'Prometheus Unbound' Shelley's Asia is hopeful as fair; and the fairest of her children ought, were the noble day-dream of the poet anything but a dream, to be of right the most hopeful also. But truer, I fear, though sadder is the Spirit that speaks by the same voice in a later dream that has, for the Ottoman Empire in Asia as in Europe, a much wider application than the "Hellas" of which it bears the name.

Oh cease! must hate and death return?
Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to the dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy!
The world is weary of the past—
Oh might it die or rest at last.

A VISIT TO UPPER EGYPT AND THEBES.

Though the Egypt of our day, as recent events have more than sufficiently shown, has no great interest for the general English, or indeed, bondholders and professional politicians excepted, for any European mind, and though the Egypt of the past has been vulgarised,—I use the word in its wider as well as in its more restricted sense,—almost to wearisomeness by tourists, photographers, professors, and the myriad yearly visitants of the Nile, I yet think the present Essay, written in the year 1866, and published in 'Macmillan's Magazine' for the January ensuing, ought not to be omitted from among the memorials of my wanderings. Giving, as it does, the impressions of a time when Ismail Pasha was undisputed Viceroy, and neither Dual Commission nor Arabi Beg were yet thought of, it has required, for reproduction in this year of grace, careful revision and no little alteration; perhaps the writer's own opinions on certain topics have been somewhat modified by the lapse of twenty-two suns. But a better panoramic view of what yet remains to us of Thebes of the Hundred Gates, I have found given nowhere else; and the notices of the much-preconized "fellahs" and their ways towards the conclusion of the Essay may attract notice from their unlikeness to the pretty *tableaux de genre* of more sentimental artists in this field. Yet for truthful likeness, I hold by my sketch.

A WHOLE preface of delays, unavoidable in any part of the Levantine East, most unavoidable in Egypt, is at last concluded, and I am on board his Royal Highness the Viceroy of Egypt's Nile steamer, the *Sey'yideeyah*, with —— Beg for companion. He is Commissioner for the Egyptian, I for the British and American governments; we are on our way to examine the complaints brought by a Gerent of the Powers I have the honour to represent against a foreigner employed under the former rule. Of the voyage itself, its sights and its events, I have here no space to write; let my narration begin with the hour when our steam was let off under the walls of Luxor.

Spite of business, spite of Khamseen winds, and a more than

Indian heat, we managed during the days we passed here to visit all the wide-spread wonders of this most ancient capital. In some respects it fell short of, in others much exceeded, my expectations. To give a clearer view of so extensive a field, let me put into one visits made at different times, and group interrupted fragments into a united whole.

Anchored close under a sandy shelf nearly thirty feet in height, nothing of Luxor and the eastern view was visible to us from the deck of our steamer where she lay. To the west the scene was somewhat more open; fields of brown or yellow grain for miles away, with the lofty rock of Kornah, whence the name of a large village close underneath, towering beyond; but the ruins themselves were shut out from sight by the low water-level.

We scrambled up the eastern bank as best we might. Landing-places in the European sense of the term are unknown in Egypt, save where the Viceroy himself occasionally disembarks. Thebes is hardly a likely place to attract the Pharaoh, or Joseph, of our day; there are no factories or Frankfort money-lenders here. Once arrived at the top of the ascent, Luxor, with its monuments, stood before us, only a few yards distant. Their castle-like appearance has given the place its Arab name of El-Aksar, or "the Castles," abbreviated into Luxor by European pronunciation.

A huge temple—for such in the main it seems to have been—has left a series of ruins which form a kind of backbone to half the modern hovel-built village, much as the skeleton of an elephant might be over-crusted with anthills. Right opposite where we had landed were some fourteen huge columns, with heavy umbrella-like capitals, the whole surmounted by an architrave of proportionate blocks of stone; half buried in sand, these pillars still rise to about thirty feet high; mud cottages of the modern "lesser man" nestle between their shafts. The capitals yet bear traces of painting; the shafts are smooth, and of that rich yellow-tinted stone which harmonises so well with the Egyptian light and sky. Further on to the south are four ranges, more or less shivered, of smaller but more graceful

pillars; they belong to that early style in which alone, amid the monuments of Egypt, the mind is gratified by an idea of beauty independent of dimension. The entablature of each column is nearly square; below this is a lotus-bud capital inverted, then a smooth shaft; further down a ribbed undershaft, resembling many stems coalesced into one. Here, too, the ugly mud walls of modern denizens have filled up most of the intervening spaces. Still further to the south are the remains of large chambers, with walls of Cyclopean architecture; these seemingly represent what once was a sanctuary with inner apartments, perhaps for the priests; above, and overlooking these, stands a straggling brick house, once tenanted by a French Vice-Consul, now the residence of Lady Duff-Gordon. Its court-yard is full of statues collected among the adjoining ruins on either side the river and brought hither; some are of hard granite, rose or black, and remarkable for the polish of their execution, dog and cat-headed figures, or sleepy human shapes.

The entire collection has since, I am told, been housed in the National Museum at Boulac.

Returning to the north, a space equal about to that which we have just traversed is crowded with small peasant buildings, mounds of decomposed brick, a mosque, an Arab school, and other like constructions, all mixed up with, and in great measure concealing, stone walls, pillars, hieroglyphics, and even entire rooms belonging to the old building. Fully to make out and understand their original plan, half a village would have to be cleared away. But on an open piece of ground in front rise the two thick and slanting piles of masonry that form the Propylæum; and what was once the main temple entrance lies between them. At a little distance aside, towers the one remaining decorative obelisk; the other less happy in fate, is degraded to a gewgaw ornament of the "Place de Concorde" at Paris. Right before the Propylæum three gigantic statues, breast-deep in sand and village dust, with faces brutally mutilated, still keep watch; their fourth brother has disappeared.

Such are the principal ruins of Luxor, in proportion and style

one of the most favourable specimens left us of old, præ-Ptolemaic Egyptian architecture. But it is also one of those in most imminent danger of total destruction; for the Nile, whose strange vagaries are here absolutely uncontrolled, is daily and hourly eating away the eastern bank, on which it stands. Its date and history are well known; they reach back to the dim, almost præ-historic glories of a memorable past. But even now its stately colonnades, its massive walls, its pyramidical Propylæum and lonely obelisk, standing out all black above the Nile shore against the shining morning sky, or reddened into fire by the western sun, have a strange dead beauty, belonging not to other ages only, but almost to another world.

From Luxor to Karnak our cavalcade—for we are all of us on horseback, leaving donkeys to Cofts, effendis and travellers—leads a short mile northwards through fields and stunted vegetation, for here the ground is too high to be fully reached by the vivifying waters of the Nile, that only life of Egypt. Now we are close under the most colossal structures of man's world, the Pyramids themselves scarcely excepted. Let us approach them in succession. First to the south, and leaving just on one side the miserable hovels of the modern half Bedouin village, we traverse a thick-set avenue of Sphinxes; each holds a small human figure between its mutilated fore-paws; monsters and men are all alike decapitated. Passing these we come on the southern portal, a structure full seventy feet in height, and belonging, I am informed, to the dwindling epoch of the Ptolemies, when the primal Egyptian idea of beauty and effect had in great measure been lost, and that of colossal size alone remained. Like most Nile monuments, whether of the earlier or later dynasties, it is covered with huge insculptured figures of kings and gods, gods and kings, besides smaller hieroglyphics *ad infinitum*; but every semblance of a face whether human or bestial has in almost every instance been carefully erased, a barbarism by some ascribed to Christian, by others to Mahometan rigorism, and not improbably due to both. Of the outer wall, connecting this gate with the others, little is left; but what still remains consists of huge stone blocks, without clamps, cement,

or other assurance of stability than their own perfect adjustment and great weight.

At some distance further on, and within what once was an inclosure, stands the first temple: its courts and chambers are disposed on the one unvarying plan, common to all such structures in conservative, præ-Roman Egypt; its sculptures indicate various gods, kings too, amongst whom the ever-recurring Rameses, First, Second, or Third, is conspicuous; by good fortune, one of Rameses II.'s best bas-relief portraits, a delicately-featured, almost feminine face, has remained unscathed. The style of the building, earlier in date by far than that of the subsequently affixed portal, is massive and imposing, though with little attempt at ornament or grace.

But the wonder of Karnak is the so-called Palace—it may have been, and indeed, I incline to think, was in fact a tribunal hall, or some kind of public meeting-place—next beyond. The entrance, looking west, passes between gigantic wedge-shaped walls of solid masonry, each even now, when half buried in Nile deposit, rising to some forty to fifty feet above the ground level. Their thickness is truly enormous; on one side of the inner entrance the *savans* of the French republican armies of 1798 have carved, high up, names, dates, and astronomical observations; a slight intellectual scratch, the lesser man, on the massive features of a giant ancestry. Passing on, we come on a vast open court, traversed by a double range of columns proportioned to the space they occupy, but most broken; shivered statues, granite hewn, guard the second gate, whence we enter the wondrous hall, a forest of huge pillars, for an approximate idea of which I must refer to pictures, photographs, and, but in second rank, *ex-professo* descriptions; yet, after all, it must be seen to be rightly appreciated, if even thus. Once this hall was roofed in, and several of its stone rafters still lie athwart, connecting the cumbrous capitals; the centre and wider passage was surmounted by a second or upper story, and must have attained full a hundred feet in height from floor to roof. Walls and pillars are covered with hieroglyphics and figures, some of tolerably good finish; but their general effect is detrimental,

because they are without order or arrangement. Each succeeding monarch or high priest cut his emblem or likeness, his dog-headed or hawk-headed god, as fancy took him; some even carved their symbols over the work of their predecessors, like ill-bred travellers scratching names and commonplaces on an edifice, or advertising placards, over-plastering each other on a wall. Every outline, every stone, every sculpture bears witness to vast despotic power, excessive superstition, and defective taste. The one redeeming feature is the idea of strength—never, perhaps, carried further by man as builders—and of its correlative quality, abidance. They built for eternity, and they obtained what they built for.

Beyond the hall, and continuous with the great central avenue, which traverses it from west to east, we come on a chaos of ruins, tumbled blocks, and fragments of statues, from amid which emerge, fresh and upright as on their first day, two noble granite obelisks; the loftier of the two monoliths, itself indeed the loftiest of its kind in the whole world, measures, base and all, some ninety feet in height. A strange contrast, close at its foot, lies the wreck of a colossal effigy hewn out of similar material; its destruction, which must have been a work of labour and time, was doubtless provoked by its human form. These, and their duplicates now gone—for obelisks and everything else in the Palace seem to have been symmetrically double—formed the centrepiece of the great edifice. Follows to the east a wilderness of tumbled walls and columns; among them, and better preserved than the rest, is a small nor inelegant temple, once used or abused as a Coftic church, where uncouth saints are daubed over, and half conceal uncouth gods; further on stand some pseudo-caryatid pillars of a kind not uncommon in Egyptian architecture. Last and alone, for the side-walls have fallen into mere heaps, a gigantic gate, the eastern, marks the outer circuit; through and on either side of its span glitters a fair extent of fields and villages, tall palms and tufted acacias; and far off the jagged mountain range that hides from view Koseyr and the Red Sea. Three almost similar hill-peaks here seen in close conjunction earned

of old for the town at their base a dedication to the Egyptian Trinity, or quasi-Trinity, in whose honour it still retains the name of Thot.

Within the ruins of Karnak are many objects of great, but rather of antiquarian, than of artistic interest. Yet even this latter is claimed by the portrait, for such it is, of Cleopatra; her full-lipped voluptuous face may be seen any day reproduced among the too famous dancing-girls and prostitutes of Upper Egypt. Around one of the inner courts also bas-relief sculpture images, not unsuccessfully, fruits, flowers, plants, birds and beasts. Amid these last, a bull with three horns, doubtless a very sacred personage in his day, makes a conspicuous figure. But, after all, the great wonder of Karnak is Karnak itself, taken as a whole. Rightly to appreciate it, one should climb, as I did, on one of its lofty though ruinous walls, and look down and around on its wilderness of columns, standing, leaning, or prostrate, on its shattered masonry in huge riven masses, its dark vaults, lofty gates, and Propylæa, its still towering obelisks, and vast extent of ruin. The sight reminded me most of some published views of old Yucatan; only Karnak is on a vaster scale. Egyptian antiquity differs, too, from Mexican in the total absence of vegetation, whether independent or parasitic, amongst its stones; no creepers, no ivy, not so much as a moss or lichen, clothes the dry bones of the dead past.

We will now return to Luxor and the steamer, take the jolly boat, and cross the river. Long before we reach the western bank, our boat sticks fast in the mud, and the soldier-sailor crew have to carry us on shore as best they may; we reach thus a low shelving beach, lately left dry by the diminished stream, and planted with melons. We mount our horses, cross what will be four months hence, when old Nile is at the full, a large island, and redescend to traverse the now waterless bed of a second branch of the river. Here a large bull buffalo charges our party full tilt; then bounds away, tossing his ugly head, as a negro of our crew gallops fiercely against him, and gives him the contents of a double-barrelled fowling-piece, only loaded, I regret to say, with small shot. Half an hour's ride more to the

north-west, through rich fields, mostly unreaped for want of hands—a want too often felt in Upper Egypt, whence conscription, Vice-Regal factories, and the other many claims of a modernised, centralised, and unsympathetic government have drained off no insignificant portion of the population—brings us to a grove of the once familiar friend of my wandering days, the Arabian tamarisk or "Ithel," here called "Athel." Through its feathery branches we descry the façade of the Temple of Kornah, so named from the neighbouring village, which in turn derives its appellation from the precipice under which it stands. Kornah means "horn," a word expressive of the bold and precipitous character of the rock itself. The temple resembles in architectural details that of Luxor, but surpasses it in an almost Doric dignity of proportion united with simplicity; it seemed to me almost the most favourable specimen bequeathed us by the builders of ancient Egypt. Its date refers it to one of the earlier dynasties.

We could now see far off in the plain on our left, and against the background of the yellow mountain-side, the dark outlines of Medinat-Haboo, of the Rameseum, of Deyr and its vaults, and the great twin statues of Greek-named Memnon. But behind the mountain of Kornah, at a distance of three miles, or rather more, lie the famous "Abwāb-el-Molook,"—literally, "Gates of the Kings," and, in fact, their tombs. Now, in the torrid May season of Upper Egypt, it was a matter of some importance for us to visit this spot, the most distant of all, and to return thence, before noon-day, the more so that the road thither lies amid bare rocks, which reflect the sun's rays like a reverberating furnace. Remounting—for I had alighted to sketch the temple, and my companions to rest—we turned our horses' heads towards the western mountain, and soon entered on the winding gorge.

This valley, or rather cleft, is indeed natural in the main, but Egyptian art has done much to render it what it now is; projecting rocks have been cut away, the slope has been levelled, and in some places the entire face of the mountain shaved off,—partly, it would seem, for appearance sake, partly

to widen the passage. Here was doubtless of old time a fashionable promenade for the inhabitants of the neighbouring capital, a favourite lounge or drive when some anniversary suggested a general visit to the cemetery, or when the Turanian propensities of the native races, if Mr. Ferguson's ingenious generalisations have weight, might lead them in accordance with the prevailing ancestor-worship of their kin, to make the tombs of their dead a customary resort. The dry monotony of desert rocks like these, the silence and the bare sterility of ages, better set forth the grandeur of death than all the mean, often absurd and degrading paraphernalia of undertakers, funeral trappings, and mortuary rites. For whatever the cause, hereditary or other, it is certain that the awesome image of Death, beautified though it was by the truthfulness of the almost contemporary Hellenic mind into the likeness of repose, or veiled under that of a passing nor wholly unhopeful separation, or hidden away amid the slight ashes of the funeral pyre, or even boldly transformed into the exuberance of ever-renovate life, stood forth in all the repulsive horror of its strictly phenomenal aspect before the deep but narrow Egyptian mind; a ghastly ending to this life; a terrible portal to a retributive future. Hence the continual endeavour to keep in prominent view that which Nature herself, wiser than her over-wise children, so promptly, in some instances so absolutely, removes from actual sight; and hence the death-memorials of the Upper Nile, rivalling almost in massiveness and size, while surpassing in pertinence of character, the pyramid piles and labyrinthine catacombs of Lower and lesser Egypt. For to the Egyptian of Thebes, even more than to him of Memphis or Bubaste, death was not merely the end of life, it was its purposed goal, nor its goal merely but its retribution; an ideal too faithfully transmitted, not transmuted, from the Thebais to Western asceticism, and destined for a time to rule with tyrannic sway over the European and more especially over the Teutonic mind, not less absolutely than once over the Egyptian; and to give to the noon of Christianity itself a tinge of gloom alien the most part from the cheerful promise of its brighter and healthier dawn.

Such were, at least in substance, my reflections as we rode up the valley of Tombs, to where opens out the highway that leads on by four days of westerly track to the Great Oasis, a region now seldom visited, and itself the portal to further and still less explored regions, Darfoor and Central African. The route is, I am assured, safe from any danger unless what tropical Nature herself occasions to the African traveller; the scarcity of water hereabouts ridding the wayfarer from the apprehension of Bedouins, while the black races further on, if unprovoked into hostility, are of all uncivilised men the least unfriendly to the stranger.

But an expedition of this kind had no place within our more limited programme; so, leaving the open road aside, we continued to thread the rock-avenue of "Abwāb-el-Molook," to where it terminates in a mountain-hewn *cul-de-sac*, the cemetery itself. Piles of rubbish, the tokens of recent excavation, and the sure though slow processes of time, have rendered the original rock-disposition of the space round and into which the tombs are hewn but half-discernible. It is a wide amphitheatre, formed by a depression in the mountain, partly natural, partly artificial. One after another small square entrances show themselves in the rock; each leads down to inner chambers hewn out for a great distance, where the dead once reposed; once only, alas! for Persian fury, Greek curiosity, Coftic bigotry, Arab fanaticism or greed, and last, but not least, on the muster-roll of unbidden guests, the European tourist or antiquary, have left but few undisturbed tenants; a sad result of so much pains to remain in hidden quiet.

The tomb of Rhameses II. is a fair sample of what one meets with, more or less, in all the rest. It offers a square-hewn passage of ten or twelve feet each way, gradually descending into the mountain, with on either side small apartments communicating with the central gallery; then follows a large hall, or divan, supported on pillars; after this comes a second and more rapid descent, with another hall, more apartments, and passages, blocked up at the further end. The walls are everywhere painted with emblems, the interest of which can scarcely

be overrated. These paintings, for the exclusion of outer-air influences rendered the labour of carving here unnecessary, have, with scarce an exception, reference to one of three things —namely, either to the land of Egypt itself, its river and produce, or the Divine protection afforded to its kings and rulers, or to the state of souls after death. These three topics are handled in illustrations which bear in every line, every shape, the impress of three corresponding principles, namely, serfdom, absolute monarchy, and retribution to come. The cowed attitudes of the labourers, their groupage, in bands, each presided over by an official twice the ordinary human size, a feature of frequent occurrence in mediæval, though, I think, rarely or never in classic Greek or Roman art, their very uniformity of dress and feature, all indicate, if not slavery, at least forced labour and serfish dependence. Meanwhile the kings, huge in stature and portrayed in the most gorgeous colours, are never without some equally gay and præter-human genius at their side; while a caressing attitude, and an outstretched hand, imply patronage, while yet admitting a certain fraternity of relation between the king and the god. Louis XIV. or James I. might have directed the artist of such groups, perhaps rewarded.

But the most frequent topic here is "that undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveller," at least in the ordinary course of things, returns; no undiscovered country, however, to Egyptian imagination. There the God of Justice presides, the soul is presented, weighed in scales which the Michael of Gothic imagery not rarely borrowed in after times; then received in Elysian seats and divine society, or transformed into a swine, and handed over to tormentors, orthodox devils with hooks and crooks, fit ministers of the wrath to come. Even the descent of the corpse into the tomb, painted along the sides of the very gallery by which it actually passed, is opposed by black serpents and wicked things: a not wholly unskilful hint of death-bed terrors anticipative of a final, though for a king at least, we may hope a favourable judgment. Further analogies with not a few dogmatic accessories of Christianity

are possibly traceable; nor is it, perhaps, unworthy of notice, that the conventional sign of divine and regal power—the two are synonymous in the Egyptian, as in the Stuart school—is everywhere a cross.

The colours are generally fresh, and in their shades and combinations alone does good taste alien else from the subjects themselves and their pictorial outlines alike, find a refuge. In these tombs, among other relics of old Thebes, I saw the traces of those famous mutilations which have occasioned so violent an outcry against the German Professor Lepsius and his associates; an unjust outcry; for the occasional removal of a piece of painting or sculpture for transfer to a national Museum is a proceeding blamed by no nation where their own museums or professors are concerned. And if, in course of the removal, more damage has chanced than might seem in exact proportion with the object attained, we in particular should not forget to look at home, and at the Elgin Marbles. The forgery of new hieroglyphics and inscriptions is a much more serious charge, and one from which I know not whether the learned Doctor has ever obtained a satisfactory acquittal.

Emerging from sepulchral gloom into the universal glare of the mid-day sun on yellow rocks, we rode back by the way on which we had come, and then turning to the right kept under the immediate slope of the mountain, between it and the Nile-plain, passed the hovels of modern Kornah and countless sepulchral excavations in the rocks above, till we reached the Rhamesæum where it stands near the cliff, with about two miles of level between itself and the river. Luxor is almost exactly opposite, on the east; and the two seated colossi, well known to fame and photographists, are on a line between.

This Rhamesæum, or rather what remains of it—for it is a mere fragment—is a temple commemorative, it would seem, of great victories achieved by Egyptian arms in Palestine and Syria. It faces the east, and is still guarded by its solid and slanting Propylæum, much of which is fallen into shapeless heaps, but more is yet standing. Westward some fifty yards begins the temple, its portico supported on pillars of Egyptian massiveness,

their almost disproportionate bulk being yet further enhanced by heavy caryatides affixed to their outer side. On the wall of the portico is outlined rather than sculptured Rhameses himself, colossal in a colossal war-chariot, and with an equally colossal bow in his hand; before him, figure above figure in a defiance of perspective that a Chinese might envy, are his victorious troops. and their conquered enemies, the latter tumbled head over heels, some into the quasi-hieroglyphical wavy line that in monuments of this kind invariably does duty for water, some under the horses' hoofs. On either side of the battle chariots are the order of the day; one Syrian figure only is mounted on horseback. The temple stands just beyond; its sculptures are decidedly superior in workmanship to those of the portico; one elaborate bas-relief, in which a god feeds Rhameses from the tree of immortality, displays a design and execution not unworthy of the subject. All the numerous portraits of Rhameses show us the same handsome and beardless youth, with features almost feminine, and of a much more delicate type than belongs to the average Egyptian countenance, whether past or present. I have, however, rarely observed faces of the sort, both as to outline and expression, among the Berbers,—that curious race, now-a-days denizens of the Nile Valley between Upper Egypt and Nubia Proper, and dissimilar equally from Coft and from negro in lineaments as in character; men of marked character, harsh and proud, narrow-minded but firm, unsympathetic in the main, but from among whom rulers might arise—rulers at least of whom some tyrant-dynasties of the Italian renaissance may afford the lowest, as a Rhameses or a Sesostris the highest type; barren lords, good for conquerors and task-masters, useless for all else. Right in front of the temple, amid fragments of its lesser black-porphyry brethren, lies the wreck of that unparalleled granite colossus, once Rhameses, now a well-nigh dispersonified mass. I measured its mutilated toes; they were five feet and a half across; judge, then, of the entire statue; and this, throne and all, cut of one solid block, polished too. How the monarch who caused it to be put up to his honour and glory lived long enough to have this monster effigy of his hewn out of

the iron quarries of Assouan, brought hither, carved, perfectioned, furbished and set up, or, dying first, found successors able or careful to complete it, is a difficult problem. Scarce less a problem is it who can have thrown it down, who broken it up; a thousand steam sledge-hammers would seem insufficient to the task. There it lies, retaining just shape enough to show what it was, and where man's spite has failed to deface, perfect in finish as thousands of years ago; the ground far away is over-strewn with its boulder fragments.

We sat under the black shadows of the portico—Egyptian shadows, doubtless from the contrast of the dazzling sunlight around, seem darker than any I have seen elsewhere,—and made our noonday meal, Arab fashion. I leave my companions to talk or sleep, and roam for two good hours of intense sun among the ruins, sketching and earning melancholy thoughts and a bad head-ache. At last day declines westward, and we remount our horses, on our way to visit the remaining great group of ruins known by the name of "Medinat-Haboo."

This lies at no great distance from the Rhamesæum southwards, but is almost hidden from view by ugly black masses of earth and mouldering brick, the relics of what was once a village of evil fame, a haunt of river-thieves and outlaws, till Mohammed-Alee destroyed it and scattered its cut-throat inhabitants. A long curved ridge in the plain further down towards the river marks the site of the ancient Theban hippodrome, where Rhameses himself in his days of pride may have guided his own triumphal car; but the construction, though evidently in great part remaining, has not yet been cleared out.

"Palace of the Ptolemies;" such at least is the name given to the vast mass of building before us, which is really in the main a temple belonging with its adjuncts to the same order of things as Karnak, and which in any other neighbourhood might well rank as colossal. But to the Ptolemies, or their age, it owes only some paltry additions, such as a very meagre Propylæum and entrance, with some colonnades and chambers, dwarfish in proportion and mean in material, recalling to mind the sham Egyptian Hall of Piccadilly, or Regent's Park frontages, were

they on an Egyptian, not a Greek model. For here, no less than there, an ill-advised imitation has given the failure, not the success, of what it professes to represent. But beyond these we find, upright yet in the eternity of their strength, courts, chambers, pillars, and statues, all of almost exaggerated massiveness, and affording much for admiration, though not, it may be, for æsthetic pleasure. The sculptures engraved on the walls are especially curious. Amongst these a lion-hunt reminds one of similar representations at Nineveh; the lions are very fierce, and the Pharaohic monarch transfixes them with arrows at the unsportsman-like distance of a yard or so; then comes a complicated sea-fight, in which the ships are the only intelligible indication that the affair is not on dry land. Much more remains to be dug out at Medinat-Haboo, and probably will so remain till a better age confers on Egypt that desired of all lands, but attained by few, a good government, perhaps a nationality vigorous enough in its present to take pride in and care for its past. *Utinam!*

Last we visited the double statue of Rhameses, called, or miscalled, of Memnon; it belongs to the great central avenue which once traversed the capital from Luxor to the Rhamesæum, due east to due west. Karnak must have formed the north-eastern angle of the great square, and Medinat-Haboo the south-western: a diagonal line connecting them would pass through the double colossus, which seems to have occupied the central point of the city. At the north-western angle the Temple of Kornah marks where the high-road to the royal cemetery quitted the city and entered the mountains.

Luxor, Karnak, Kornah, Rhamesæum, Medinat-Haboo, and the intervening ruins, all belong to one and the same mighty city, the Thebes of Egypt. Within historical memory the ground on which they stand was yet one, not bisected as now; for the Nile, instead of flowing west of Luxor and Karnak, thus separating one half of ancient Thebes from the other, followed a much more easterly course, nearer to the mountains on the Red Sea side, leaving the western Libyan plain wide and unbroken. Indeed, it is said, though I think the chronology must be

somewhat at fault, to have adopted its present direction only two centuries since. Now ploughing up as it does the mid-level, and wandering at random among the ruins, it undermines some, silts up others, and will probably sweep not a few clean away; Luxor, it is to be feared, among the first. Yet though old Nile himself, forgetful of his trust, take part with the destroyers, and Saturn-like, devour his own offspring, ages incalculable to man must pass before Rhameses and his brethren forfeit the eternity they have conquered from time by Titanic labour, and forethought worthier of demigods than of men.

The situation of Thebes, as the river formerly ran, was admirably adapted for a capital of the time; a noble plain, than which is no wider or richer in Upper Egypt, constantly refreshed by the free play of the winds from north, east, and west, closed in southwards only; while direct land communications lead on the one side to Koseyr, that ancient harbour and deposit of Arab commerce, and on the other to the great oasis of the "Wah," once called of Jupiter Ammon, and thence right on to Central Africa: north and south passes the great ever-open road of the mighty Nile. We should remember that in the days, those ancient days, when Thebes flourished, the staple trade of Egypt lay almost exclusively with Africa and Arabia; nor was it till a much later date that Greek influence and the growing importance of the Mediterranean coast, brought the capital down towards the Delta, and ultimately fixed it at Alexandria on the northern shore. But Greece only entered Egypt to degenerate herself, and to hurry on the degeneration of Egypt in turn; the earliest days of the Nile valley were undoubtedly the best.

We, that is the Commission of which I made a part, remained at Luxor about a fortnight, cross-examining witnesses, verifying documents, and the like. Hard work, and rendered still harder by the character of those with whom we had to deal—that most shuffling, mean-spirited, and unsatisfactory race of men, the "fellahs" of Egypt. True, they have in past time if indeed that time be wholly past so far as they are concerned, been sorely misused and oppressed; true also that they have in common with most Asiatics, of whom they are the half-

cousins, after a fashion, though near, all too near akin to African coarseness and savagery, a certain superficies of good qualities which renders their intercourse tolerable while "from outside to outside," in Arab phrase,—that is, so long as no business is concerned, and within the mere interchange of social or conventional politeness. But no sooner does an interest enter, a hope, a fear, than adieu to all shadow of truth, fair-dealing, or manliness of any sort soever. Great, too, I regret to say, is their stupidity—not for nothing is the ass the archæo-typical animal of Egypt; in obstinacy, too, the "fellah" much resembles the above-named quadruped, or surpasses. On such materials had we to labour from morning to night; happy when, out of an entire day's investigation, we had extracted, unwittingly or unwillingly, so far as our informants were concerned, a single grain of truth.

While at Luxor we celebrated—I say "we," identifying myself for the nonce with my Arabo-Turkish companionship—the "Korban-Beyram," that great annual festival commemorative of Abraham's well-known offering, or rather non-offering —that Islamitic tradition substitutes Ishmael for the Biblical Isaac, my readers are all, doubtless, aware—a festival the celebration of which images over the entire Mahometan world what is passing at Mecca at that very hour. It is the being present at Mecca and there joining in this festivity, called in Arabic "'Eyd-ed-Ḍoheyya," or "Feast of the Victims," or better, "of the forenoon sacrifices," that, in conjunction with its preceding vigil of "Wakfāt-'Arafāt," *i.e.* station of 'Arafāt, confers on the visitant of the sacred city the authentic title of "Hajjee" or pilgrim. If he perform his Mecca-ward journey at other times of the year, it is no longer "Hajj," *i.e.* "pilgrimage," but simply "Zee'ārah," or "visit."

In company with Lady Duff Gordon I attended the festival celebration, there to witness a scene very imposing when well gone through, which in this case it unfortunately was not.

The worshippers were drawn up in two long lines on an open plot of ground, where every Tuesday a fair used to be held, according to the custom generally adopted from Diar-Bekir to

Yemen, by which each several village becomes, in weekly, monthly, or yearly rotation, the centre of traffic for a considerable circumference. Behind was the common cemetery, unwalled, irregular, and shamefully neglected—this customary state of things in rural Egypt, where the "fellahs" are over brutalised in life to feel the indecency of dishonour in death, though indeed of quasi-religious veneration regarding their dead they have enough and to spare. Right in our faces glittered the morning sun; for the relative position of Luxor and Mecca brings the Kibleh, or compass-point of prayer, for the former little south of due east.

We posted ourselves to the rear of the assembly, as to take up position in front of the prayer-lines might put the congregation in danger of seeming to worship you instead of God, a serious mistake,—and waited like everyone else the arrival of the Hejjājees, a highly-respectable Luxor family, claiming descent from a certain village-saint surnamed the Hejjāj; his family name and date I have forgotten; indeed the entire individual, no less than his pedigree, seemed to my mind scarcely less apocryphal than many a saint or hero of the popular opinion elsewhere, whom, Heaven forefend, I should be so ill-mannered as to mention. However, his tomb—that of the Luxor-Hejjāj I mean—with the sempiternal cupola over it, adjoins the mosque, and to the saintly tenant prayers are made and vows offered just as to any local hamlet-patron in any other village of any other land, East or West, and with, I hope, equally satisfactory results. His progeny, real or supposed, occupy a very high place in Luxor veneration; from them Muftees, Khateebs, Imāms, Saints, &c., are selected at need; they take precedence in public solemnities, and, like all their tribe, receive presents. Now, "*il y a de la dignité à se faire attendre,*"—and our friends, well knowing that they were sure to be waited for, took care not to lose their privilege of arriving late. At last a howling sort of chant, the identical tune, as I am informed on the best authority, which the old cow died of, and which does duty on all occasions from a marriage to a funeral, announced their approach, Sheykh and all; they advanced procession-wise,

bearing banners, red and green, embroidered with the inevitable "La Ilāh illa Allāh," and took their place in the foremost ranks. One of them, the "Khateeb," or Preacher of the day, occupied the mid van; and a canopy was extemporised for his dignity from the clustered banners lately borne before him. A large black stone, just retaining form enough to announce it for the fragment of some old Egyptian king or god, had been selected to serve as pulpit; and on this, after previously shaking it to test the stability of its equilibrium, the Khateeb mounted, staff in hand, and began his say.

Now, in the discourse appropriate to the 'Eyd or feast, it is customary for the preacher to arrange his sermon into a recurrence of measured periods, each concluding with the well-known formula "Allāho Akbar," intoned in a sonorous voice: whereon the whole assembly, like one man, are to take up the burden, repeating in half chant, "Allāho Akbar, Allāho Akbar, Allāho Akbar, w' lā Ilāh illa Allāh; Allāho Akbar, Allāho Akbar, w' l'Illāh el hamd." This recitative, breaking out at frequent intervals from a great multitude, is imposing in the extreme; I have heard it often in crowded mosques, and never without a thrill at the deep, united, concentrated belief it implies. But here at Luxor the effect was lamentably reversed, neither Khateeb, though a born saint, nor congregation, knowing how to go through it properly; only an irregular buzz was to be heard, without time or measure; while the words of the preacher and the responses of the people were alike drowned in the chattering, scolding, quarrelling, and screeching of the women and children, who, excluded by custom from direct participation in the public prayers, now grouped themselves around with utter contempt of stillness, reverence, or order; while the men were some too quick at their prayers and prostrations, others too slow; an Irish scene altogether. At last discourse and ceremonies came to an end, which the sun in our faces, the dust in our eyes, and the cackling in our ears had made us long since desire, and everybody jumped up, to wish the Sheykh many happy returns of the day, and to obtain his special benediction by kissing his hand. This manœuvre our

villagers executed with such vehemence as to undo his turban, discompose his robes, and still more his temper; till the holy man set about blessing them in right good earnest, but with his stick, and returned each kiss of devotion by a loving cudgel-thwack over the head. Not a whit did this proceeding shake their faith, however, or diminish their reverence; the idol of the "fellah" is as tough as himself; and beating is a divinely-ordered law of the universe for either. To which conclusion rightly drawn my readers may, if they care, add a second, that wherever in course of the recent Mahometan "revival," Wahhabee doctrines and practices, or rather non-practices, may prevail, they are not to be sought for among the peasants of Upper Egypt.

The rest of the day passed in slaughtering the victims—each household ought, in strict observance, to offer one, a sheep if possible, but the poorer sort occasionally compromise with a fowl—and next in eating them. A Bedouin kind of dish, compounded of boiled meat and sopped bread, is first of all served up on this day; its fashion commemorates the habits of those who first founded this solemnity, the Arabs of Arabia proper, where boiling is the exclusive culinary preparation.

WEST INDIAN MEMORIES:

THE LEEWARD ISLANDS AND THE "BOILING LAKE."

This Essay, written during the time that I held the position of Her Majesty's Consul at St. Thomas, West Indies, in the year 1876, though published at a somewhat later date, requires for its better understanding a few preliminary remarks.

The allusions, explicit or otherwise, to the Philippine Islands, which find place at the outset of the Essay and recur in its course, were due to my having received, almost immediately after my visit to Dominica, the news of my prospective appointment to Her Majesty's Consulate at Manila, whither indeed I proceeded shortly afterwards.

Secondly: I would assure my readers that the "Napoleonic" proclivities manifested in my notices of Martinique and the French Antilles have no political significance whatever; the respective merits of French forms of government or partizanships never having been brought within the scope either of my observation or opinion. Of what is best for France, a Frenchman can alone be judge; the verdict, however dogmatically enounced, of a foreigner in this regard is not merely of no account, it is an impertinence. My own attachment, a purely sentimental one, to the Imperial memory is simply due to much kindness and great favours received by myself from Napoleon III. at a time when circumstances, wholly unconnected with the present writings, allowed of his making and of my receiving such. Hence, whatever may have been the errors of the Emperor, I have always cherished, with affectionate gratitude, the memory of the Man, and, for his sake, of the Family; and always shall. But this is a merely personal consideration, a debt of private gratitude, and has nothing whatever to do with politics or parties, whether French or other.

Thirdly: subsequent to my visit to Dominica, two or three exploring parties, as I have been informed, visited the "Boiling Lake"; and a description of it, confirmatory in every respect of my own, appeared, I am told, in the *Field*. But in 1880, that is only four years after the date of my original publication, an earthquake, no rare occurrence among the Leeward Antilles, is said to have opened a rift in the basin of the lake, through which its waters escaped; putting an end, and, it may well be feared, an absolute one, to a truly

wonderful and, so far as I know, unique phenomenon of Nature. I am all the more glad that I visited it in time.

THE crescent-like series of West Indian Islands, somewhat capriciously divided in official parlance, which here has followed nautical designation, into "Windward" and "Leeward," or more appropriately summed up together by the well-sounding title of the "Lesser Antilles," is, after a fashion, antipodal to the Philippine group of the eastern hemisphere; or, to put it more geographically, the two Archipelagos, Hispano-Malayan and Caribbean, occupy opposite points of the chart on a lesser circle of the globe, drawn some fifteen or sixteen degrees north of the equator. Being now, so destiny has willed it, on my long way from the one to the other, I cannot refrain from speculating on what further circumstances of opposition may possibly exist between them, or from hoping that such circumstances may be neither many in number nor essential in kind. The Philippines are, by all accounts, pleasant places, isles of Eden, lotus-lands; but pleasanter, more lotus-bearing, more Eden-like than are the West Indies, taken as a whole from Jamaica to Trinidad, they can hardly be, or afford in their turn brighter and better memories than those which three years of the Caribbean Archipelago have, with few and insignificant exceptions, stored away in my mind. True, indeed, that some of the Lesser Antilles, our present topic, are in a manner less desirable than others, because less favoured by nature or the course of human events. Thus, for instance, Barbados, though well peopled and highly cultivated, has no pretensions to picturesque scenery of coast or inland; while the little Virgin Islands, barren, abandoned, and hopeless, as they now unfortunately are, might not unsuitably exchange their original denomination for that of the "Lone Spinster Islands," or the "Old Maids" downright. Nor they only, but the entire northward lying group, formed by the adjacent Leeward Islands, namely, Saba, Eustatius, St. Kitt's, Nevis, Antigua, and the rest, may, with scarce an exception, be included in the same catalogue of unproductive aridity.

Want of rain, a want now protracted over the space of nearly

twenty years, has, more than any other cause, wrought among them this desolation; though to what adverse influence this very want is to be attributed would be hard to determine. By some the too reckless clearing of the original forests is inculpated as the cause of drought, some ascribe it to a gradual shifting of the magnetic poles, and a corresponding declination, north or south, of the tropical rain-belt itself; others, again, bring in a verdict of guilty against the irrepressible Gulf Stream; while others, with about as much plausibility, accuse the sins of the people, the Colonial Office; perhaps Sir Benjamin Pine himself and the Confederation. But whatever may be the cause, the effect is not less evident than disastrous; nor has any modern Elijah as yet appeared to dispel by prayer or science the all-too-stubborn drought of this Samaria of the West.

Poor grey islands, noble outlines of mountain and vale, stately blanks, unfilled by the varied details of prosperity and life! Waist-deep they stand, thirsty and forlorn in the midst of the unprofitable salt sea waters, vainly baring their parched-up bosoms to the pitiless sky; while far overhead the white clouds, borne along hour after hour on the strong wings of the trade-winds, mock their want with an ever-renewed, ever-unfulfilled promise of rain, till, day by day, what was once green pasture land parches up into brown, burnt-up stubble, gaunt trees stretch out their once leafy boughs in the grey nakedness of premature decrepitude, and the valleys that in bygone years waved with the golden green of the ripening harvest, now stretch down the hill slopes in pale yellow streaks of juiceless cane. A melancholy sight; let us leave it behind as we pass on southward to better prospects and more cheerful lands.

The turning-point, so to express it, of the West Indian climate, the line that distinguishes the well-watered tropical region from the arid sub-tropical zone, is for the present situated about the latitude of Guadaloupe, a large and fertile, but in more respects than one an ambiguous, island; French in title, but little visited by foreigners, and hardly better known to the generality of Frenchmen themselves. Yet Guadaloupe, like

Martinique, has the advantage, if advantage it be, of a spokesman in the person of a "Député," sent by universal suffrage, or what does duty for it, to the Representative Chamber of Versailles, where the West Indian members take their place, as I am told, somewhere in the caudal portion of the Extreme Left. Nor, I regret to say it, are the sentiments of the insular majority which the Deputies represent a whit more favourable to stability or order, under whatever rule, than those of Victor Hugo himself; a strange instance of what one of our deepest thinkers has justly called the "baffling" element in human nature. Here are islands, fertile indeed, but diminutive as fertile, on whose behalf and for whose advantage the great mother country has lavished rather than spent, and still, even at the time of her own greatest need, continues to lavish, sums that our own more frugal government would find by much too costly, or rather would never dream of finding at all, for the benefit of giant Australia, New Zealand, or the Cape, with all their dominions, all their provinces. And yet, in return for its unbounded liberality, the French Administration meets with little from its subjects whether in Martinique or Guadaloupe, whether black or coloured, but an unpopularity so decided that not all the machinery of French prefectures and "mairies" can in election time determine so much as a vote, much less a return.

Some excuse for this wide-spread spirit of opposition may indeed be found in the curious fact that the white lords of the soil are, in spite of Frohsdorf manifestoes and the persistent imbecility of the "lilies" and Henri V. even now (*risum teneatis amici*), Legitimists almost to a man; though a few, condescending somewhat to the dictates of common sense, apologetically confess Imperialist propensities. On the other hand, the coloured folks are with equal or greater unanimity, and certainly more logic, Republicans, not to say Communists; while the blacks, so far as their philosophical "live-and-let-live" temperament permits their taking part on either side, follow the lead of their more restless half-brothers. Another cause is to be found in the too general adoption, throughout two-thirds of the island, of the "Central Factory" system, the very

system so preconized by theorizing economists as the one great panacea of all West Indian ills. These factories have, however, in their practical working not cured but rather intensified every existing evil of the land, financial, political, and social. It is impossible in the limited space of the present Essay to enter into the numerous and complicated details of so vast a topic; enough to say, summarily, that these factories have deeply disturbed the social balance of Martinique by degrading the independent planter-proprietor, the typical monarch of the land, into the relative inferiority of a mere head farmer; that they have even more dangerously disarranged the political equilibrium by disconnecting the agricultural population and the labourers at large from their traditional lords and leaders, and massing them together instead into turbulent crowds of mere factory workmen; while the financial evils of their causing, amounting latterly to a real crisis, are due to a combination of circumstances and results the investigation of which would be better suited to the pages of a blue-book or a political economy treatise than to those of a publication like this.

Nature, anyhow, is not here to blame. Martinique, with its rich soil, its gentle slopes, its superabundant irrigation, its noble harbours, is of all the Lesser Antilles the most nature-favoured, a very emerald among inferior gems; and when my French hosts laughingly asked me, as they often did, "What can possibly have induced you to give this territory back to us, after having once held it for your own?" "Our inconceivable ignorance, I suppose, and our blundering unwisdom," was the only plausible answer that I could make for ourselves. I should also add, lest my preceding remarks on the political condition of the island should be taken in too absolutely and accordingly in too depreciatory a sense, that the Martinique Creoles, coloured or black, bear no unfavourable comparison with the native-born population of other West Indian colonies, either for energy, capacity, or intelligence; and that the urbanity and general refinement of taste and bearing which are, or, at least, till quite recently were, admittedly the distinguishing characteristics of French society, on whatever side of the Atlantic, are by no

means wanting among the nationalized Frenchmen of the lovely Josephine.

The mention of this name reminds me how, during the three weeks that the courtesy of my French hosts detained me a willing lingerer in their pleasant companionship, I enjoyed the long-wished-for opportunity of visiting the birthplace of the bride of the First Napoleon, and the ancestress of our talented though unfortunate friend and ally, the late French Emperor. On the southerly side of the noble "Fort de France" bay, and within the limits of the "La Pagerie" estate, stands, or rather stood, at no great distance from the coast, the pretty little dwelling-house of "L'Hermitage," where the Taschère family long resided, preferring, it seems, the picturesque seclusion of the spot to the livelier but more exposed neighbourhood of "La Pagerie" and the "Trois Islets." The dwelling-house itself, the home of the beautiful Creole's childhood, has, alas, disappeared; and a few foundation traces yet visible among the mango-grove that nestles in the slope of the green valley just where it rises upwards to the abrupt volcanic heights of "Montagne la Plaine" beyond, are all that remains to tell where it once has been. But the future empress herself was not born there. Somewhat lower down in the ravine, close by the torrent that of old times supplied water to the sugar-mill, stood and yet stands the old-fashioned factory or boiling-house, strongly built, and sheltered from the chances of weather by steep banks on either side. Hither Josephine's mother, then already in labour, was carried for safety when the hurricane of 1761 threatened every less solidly constructed tenement with ruin; and here, in an upper room, now floorless, and open to the outer air on every side, Napoleon's good star rose on the world. To me, not being a French politician, and accordingly not incapable of appreciating the splendours, however blurred by faults and failures, of the most brilliant dynasty of our age, it was a marvel to see a spot possessed of such interest, and worthy of such veneration, one might have thought, to whoever had shared in some degree (and what Frenchman did not?) the glories and the gains of the great empire, abandoned as it now is to the neglect of absolute

forgetfulness, if not contempt. To keep the homely vault—it is nothing more—in decent repair would not, I should think, have been too heavy an expense for the national treasury; and among the many monuments that throughout the dominions of the Tricolor commemorate events or persons of far less importance, surely a slab of marble might have been found to mark the birthplace of Josephine, the ornament of the first, the parent of the second empire.

Fortunately for herself, Martinique has, however, atoned in some measure for her remissness at L'Hermitage by the handsome statue of her imperial daughter that now occupies a central position in the wide tree-shaded "savannah" of Fort de France. To what particular hand the workmanship of the statue is due, I know not; but the execution is decidedly good, and the beautiful features of the young general's bride are said to have been faithfully reproduced in all that art can transfer from flesh to marble. Curiously enough, those features seem, in the fulness of the lips, the gentleness of the eyes, and the general outline of the face, to belong to that peculiarly attractive type in which a slight admixture of African blood gives to its possessor that rounded voluptuousness of contour, no less than that warmth of colour so often wanting in the purely European Creole. Whether, as island tradition affirms, such a union was really traceable in the Taschère family, or whether, as European prejudice has anxiously proclaimed, the ancestral origin always remained French, and French alone, is a question difficult, if not impossible, to decide on merely annalistic evidence. But if the statue at Fort de France bears a truthful resemblance to its original, there can, I think, be little doubt that to her other imperial titles the great empress added that of consanguinity, however remote, with the Nile-Queens of old time, whose granite effigies still smile in calm serenity of power in the dim twilight of the British museum, or among the lone colonnades of Luxor and the Egyptian palms.

Midway between Martinique and Guadaloupe lies Dominica, won, like the sister islands, from its former masters by the sword, but, unlike them, retained beneath the conqueror's flag.

Little inferior in size to Martinique itself, it as much surpasses it in its amazing picturesqueness of scenery as it falls short of it in adaptability for general cultivation. Indeed, in the wild grandeur of its towering mountains, some of which rise to five thousand feet above the level of the sea; in the majesty of it almost impenetrable forests; in the gorgeousness of its vegetation; the abruptness of its precipices, the calm of its lakes, the violence of its torrents, the sublimity of its waterfalls, it stands without a rival not in the West Indies only, but, I should think, throughout the whole island catalogue of the Atlantic and Pacific combined. But waterfalls and precipices are objects more welcome to the artist than to the planter; and the angles of landscape beauty are not generally coincident with those of agricultural productiveness. And so it comes to pass that of the two hundred thousand acres that form the surface of Dominica, scarcely one-tenth part, if even so much, is actually under cultivation. The capital town, Roseau, though a cheerful and thriving place in its way, with its neatly-paved streets, pretty cottages, gay gardens, and handsome Catholic cathedral, numbers less than five thousand inhabitants; and the pleasant orchard-embowered negro villages sprinkled here and there along the coast have comparatively few counterparts amid the labyrinth of rock and wood that forms the bulk of the island.

Yet human life, the one true meaning and summary of all other sublunary life, the tongue and purport of this our earth, and without which rocks, trees, waters, skies, suns, however "sweet and pleasant things," as the old temple-building monarch of Jerusalem called them long ago, are, for all that, feelingless and dumb, is not absolutely wanting even in the inmost recesses of the Dominican mountain-maze. Deep in emerald valleys, hemmed in by ravine and precipice, overhung with towering tree-ferns and the glossy giant leaf of the wild plantain, moist with the daily showers that suddenly sweep down like white curtains from the dark and jagged heights overhead, to be as suddenly followed by the hot sunshine of the cloudless blue till every form of vegetable life springs up and flourishes in a confused plenitude of beauty—even here in these seemingly

inaccessible Edens, glisten between rock and forest the scattered huts, each with its little garden of half-reclaimed wilderness of flower and leaf, where live the wood-cutter, the charcoal-burner, the negro cultivator, each with his swarming family, part and parcel of the wild yet gentle nature around. Scenes where rises the thought so old and yet so new, old as Hesiod, as Horace, as Ebn Toghrai, recent as Goldsmith, as Cowper, as Wordsworth—the thought disclosed in sudden gleams amid the fitful storminess of Byron, nor wholly unknown even to the artificial existence of our own day, and its prophet, the bard of 'Locksley Hall.' It is the thought that always abides, though it may not be always perceptible, in the depth of every human heart that has a depth, in every mind that is not mere surface and show; "were it not better with me here than in the turmoil of events and politics, in the restlessness of science and progress, in the artificialities and conventionalities of civilised life? Were there not here for me, in this wood-cutter's hut, in this garden shed,

"More enjoyment than in all this march of mind,
In the steamship, in the railway, in the thoughts that shake mankind?"

Vain thought! Better it might be, perhaps, in itself; but, better or not, it is not for thee. The same all-governing law, the same absolute and ever-present decree which made that peasant, that wood-cutter, what he is, and placed them one and all where they are, that gave form and being to the rocks and forests around them—the great eternal existence of which their individualized existences and thine are but the manifested temporal expressions, admits no modification, no reversal of its ordinance, allows no barter or exchange of the conditions it has determined. Thou art what thou art, as they are what they are; the sympathy, be it never so deep, that draws thee from thy appointed place may refer to a past or foreshadow a future mode of existence: in the present it is mere ineffectual longing, utterly vain.

Back, then, to the civilised and sociable life, with all its kindnesses, all its littlenesses, that awaits us in Roseau; the quiet island haven, where the daily ripples of pains and pleasures, of ambitions and interests, of parochial victories and

district defeats, may well, even when most agitated, pass for absolute calm if contrasted with the great waves of the mighty human oceans, called Continents, States, Kingdoms, Empires. To one fresh, I will not say from Europe, but from Demerara, Jamaica, or even Barbados, Dominica may stand for a symbol of absolute quiet, of repose, of stillness, almost of sleep.

Yet when that clear-sighted observer of the surface of things, A. Trollope, on his visit to Roseau, describes the place as dreamy, declining, nay, dead, he falls into an error which those who take him for their guide—and in the majority of cases he is a tolerably safe one—would do well to avoid. Neither Dominica nor its capital can justly be described as unthriving, or devoid of hope for the coming years. With a climate of singular healthfulness, a rich volcanic soil, a copious rainfall, an industrious and intelligent population, and a surplus in the insular treasury, the fortunes of the colony are already on the rise; and the cultivation of coffee, in which it formerly excelled, and now has fortunately resumed, is a surer staff to lean on along the road of success than the bruised, if not broken reed of sugar. It was in Dominica, and Dominica alone of all West Indian Islands, that my eye was gladdened by the sight of the genuine, undegenerate coffee-plant of Yemen, a very different shrub in leaf and general appearance, as in quality of produce, from the ordinary growth, West or South African in its origin, I believe, that constitutes the usual plantations of the West Indies and Brazil. Every one knows how superior the Arabian is in every respect to the South American berry; and the cultivation of the former, if rightly and intelligently carried out, cannot fail to prove for Dominica a mine of prosperity and wealth. Cocoa too flourishes here, or rather, were proper care bestowed upon it, would flourish, scarce less vigorously than in Trinidad itself; the lime-groves of Dominica already rival those of Montserrat; vanilla finds nowhere else a more congenial temperature or soil. Few, indeed, are the sources of well-being common to the western tropics, sugar to a certain extent excepted, that are wanting to Dominica, or rather in which she does not of herself abound and excel.

But it is not precisely with these topics that I have at present to do, nor is there any great need for dilating on them here. The British West Indies, like the negroes who form the bulk of their population, have no lack of panegyrists, or of calumniators either, judicious or injudicious, truthful or exaggerated, as the case may be; and whoever lists may amuse himself by balancing the ecstasies of Kingsley against the cynicism of Trollope, and the Jamaica of the 'Quarterly Review' against that of Dr. Greig and 'Fraser's Magazine.' To each man his own opinion; mine, after a tolerable amount of observation and experience, is that, taking into account the many defects and shortcomings to which everything under the moon, flesh or non-flesh, is the natural and well-endowed heir, not least so perhaps within the tropics, the British West Indies yet remain a pleasant home to the colonist, a good investment to the capitalist, a happy land (or lands, if you will) to the native; that their white population is, as a rule, right-minded and energetic, their coloured classes clever and progressive, their blacks industrious, orderly, and the very reverse of barbarous or ill-disposed in any respect. And Dominica, the first among the Lesser Antilles for picturesque beauty, is by no means the last in the catalogue of industry, productiveness, and prosperous hope.

And having said this much of the island in general, and what it has in common with others of the Lesser Antilles, I will now describe, or at least endeavour to describe, something it possesses, the like of which is certainly not to be found elsewhere throughout the whole West Indian region, nor, so far as I know, in any other region of the New World or the Old; I mean its "Boiling Lake."

Hot springs and boiling pools, some of tolerably large dimensions, do indeed exist, and plenty of them in these as in other latitudes. All down the range of the Antilles, from Saba to Tobago, there is hardly an island but owns its "Soufrière," or solfatera; the crater, it would seem, of some volcano whose eruptive energy has by degrees dwindled into that milder form, a specimen of which is familar to the easy tourist of the European continent at Pozzuoli in the neighbourhood of

Naples. Some of these soufrières are wholly or almost extinct, and have subsided into mere yellow-tinged ashpits, where perhaps a scanty thread of light vapour, or a tepid spring, finds its way through the surface, and witnesses to the expiring embers of a slowly dying fire below; others again are still active, and make a very creditable display after their fashion. Thus, in the soufrière of St. Lucia, for instance, not far from the celebrated "Pitons" of that island, the floor of the steep crater is pierced by a dozen large hollows, circular in form, and varying from four to sixteen feet in diameter; each over-boiling furiously, one with coal-black water, another with milky white, a third with grey mud, a fourth with a mixture of all these; while countless little apertures, some barely an inch across, send up steam or hot water in noisy jets, and have done so without material diminution or increase ever since the first memories of the earliest colonists, full two centuries ago. In Martinique, on the contrary, the only soufrière on duty—it is situated among the slopes of the great extinct volcano, Mont Pélé—has of late years fallen half-asleep, But none throughout the Caribbean Archipelago can rival either for extent or activity the "Grande Soufrière" of Dominica; and certainly none other rewards its visitors with the wondrous spectacle of a "Boiling Lake."

However, not the lake only, but the Soufrière itself, within the circuit of which it is situated, had remained alike unvisited and unseen though their existence was vaguely rumoured, for a hundred years past or more. Several smaller and more accessible soufrières are scattered throughout this highly volcanic island; and they had often been explored, either out of mere curiosity, or for hopes of such profit as the sulphur they contain might afford; a profit that but for the difficulties of transport might in some instances be not inconsiderable.

But towards the south-east of the island there rises a mass of abrupt forest-clad ridges, over which a white cloud ever hovers night and day; or, if blown asunder for a few hours by the strong trade-wind, soon reunites to brood as before over its native haunt. The ascent of these summits, though more than

once attempted, had for seventy years at least remained unaccomplished; tradition only, speaking through an old French description of the island, told of a large and active "soufrière," nestled amid the highest ranges of the south side; and added that the hot and steaming "Sulphur river," whose milky waters rush down crag and precipice to the Eastern Sea, close to what was then called "Point Mulâtre," or, now, Mulatto Point, took its origin in a boiling lake, situated in the same mountain region. But for a century past, at least, not only had no European succeeded in penetrating to this reported wonder; no negro charcoal-burner, however familiar with the "bush," had pushed his rovings to the brink of the soufrière; the Caribs even—of whom a few families, with the instinctive shrinking from civilisation and organised labour peculiar to their kind, yet lead a secluded and savage life on the south-eastern coast, not far from the banks of the Sulphur river itself—knew nothing, or, at any rate, had nothing to say, of the lonely region that towered above their abodes. A strong smell of sulphur, that when the wind happened to be from the south-east, reached the town of Roseau itself, though at a distance of fourteen or fifteen miles in a straight line, alone gave witness how huge must be the dimensions, how constant the activity of the furnace whence it proceeded.

So matters stood when, on a January morning in 1875, an exploring party, headed by two young and enterprising English colonists—the one a district magistrate, the other a medical practitioner—took on themselves the long-abandoned task of verification or discovery. Abandoning the shorter, but impracticable line of track that led up from the eastern coast, and which had been already, but unavailingly tried, they wisely determined to assail this stronghold of nature's wonders from the easier slopes of the west, on which side the distance was greater, but the obstacles, as they judged, less insurmountable. Their surmise was correct, and their safe return to Roseau, after three days' absence in the forest, brought with it the confirmation of the existence alike of the "Grande Soufrière" and the "Boiling Lake," both of which they described as by far sur-

passing in extent and grandeur anything yet known in the West Indies, though difficult and even dangerous of access, nor available to any ends except those of curiosity, perhaps of science.

During a second visit, which was effected some months later than the first, the explorers discovered a somewhat more circuitous but easier line of approach, following which the most dangerous and break-neck pass of the former route could be evaded. On this, as on the former occasion too, the adventurers, bivouacked in the depth of the forest, close to the soufrière itself, where they constructed an "ajoupa," or improvised wood-hut, for shelter during the nights that had unavoidably to be passed in this wild region.

The third, and up to the present date the latest, expedition to the "Boiling Lake" was on the occasion of my own visit to the island in the spring of the present year, when Dr. Nicholls, the same young and energetic medical officer who had taken a leading part in the two former expeditions, again proposed the attempt, and undertook the organisation of the party. It included besides ourselves two other Englishmen—the one a member of the "Colonial Bank" establishment, the other a son of Mr. Eldridge, the deservedly popular administrator or president of the island, whose guest I had the good fortune to be at the time. Both these companions were young, active, and possessed of every quality, bodily and mental, that could be required for an enterprise such as ours; but they, like myself, were unacquainted with the soufrière district, and the leadership of the band was therefore gladly entrusted to Dr. Nicholls, who showed himself entirely equal to the duties of the undertaking.

So one spring morning early, mounted on sure-footed island ponies, we rode out of Roseau, and set our horses' heads and our own eastward, in quest of the "Boiling Lake." Our way led first up the beautiful Roseau valley, with its steep cliffs and overshadowing woods, mingled with the bright yellow of ripening cane-fields and the darker foliage of cocoa or coffee plantations, with small European residences or negro huts peeping out here and there, till we came in sight of the great waterfalls, each a hundred feet in height, by which the waters of the Roseau river

cast themselves headlong from the central range. Higher and higher we climbed the mountain side, amid that scenery which description has so often attempted, but can never realize for those who have not themselves witnessed it, the scenery of the West Indian tropics; where the noblest forest growth that fancy can picture, mixed with tree-fern and palm, over-canopies bank and dell, thick matted with fern, golden, silver maiden-hair, every lovely variety of leaf and tint, amid red-flowered balisiers, white-blossomed arums, and a thousand other gems of Flora's crown, the whole lit up by the purest sunlight, and glittering as it waved in the glad morning breeze. Stopping a moment to drink from a mineral spring of some note, we rode on till a narrow horse-path led us across a broken plateau to the little hamlet of Laudat, about 1,500 feet above the sea. Here our guides, or rather the carriers of our provisions, hammocks, and so forth, awaited us, to perform with us the remainder of the proposed route on foot, as neither horse-track, nor indeed any other track, except what we might make for ourselves, existed further on.

Laudat is the furthest village inland in this direction, and its neat little wood cottages, about twenty in all, each one apart, and at some distance from the others, are inhabited by a hardy, chocolate-coloured race, in which French, Carib, and negro blood seems, by the indications of feature and limb, to have been mixed in tolerably equal proportions. In front of Laudat the view is open, and reaches down the Roseau valley to the blue Western sea. Behind the village-plateau rises a dense wall of forest, and further back, height above height, the central mountain range. The peasants' "gardens," to give them their established West Indian name, or, as we should call them, fields of yam, banana, sweet potatoes, badinjan, and the like, reach in irregular fashion a mile or so upwards into the woods. Our provisions, a couple of hammocks, a few blankets, and such like gear, were here divided among six of the negroes, or quasi-negroes of the place; two of whom also carried large cutlasses, in order to fray the way through the innumerable "lianes" or creepers that weave the forest together with a network that,

like the Gordian knot, may be severed by force, but not disentangled by skill.

Other and doughtier uses might have been anticipated for these formidable-looking weapons, but there were none such in truth. Wild beasts of dangerous kinds, and indeed any wild beasts at all, except harmless little agoutis, are rare in the forest; venomous serpents are unknown; the number of insects even—scorpions, centipedes, ants, and the like—is remarkably small, possibly owing to the large proportions of sulphur and iron with which the soil is everywhere imbued; and "perils of robbers" St. Paul himself, were he Apostle of Dominica, or, I believe, of any other British West Indian island, would have none to record. Our preparations had only in view a rough march, and a day and night, or, indeed, possibly two days and two nights, amid the mountain solitudes, at a height where the cold was sure to make itself almost unpleasantly felt, though we counted on sheltering ourselves under at least the relics of the "ajoupa," erected and repaired on previous occasions.

It was now noon, and if we wished to reach the ajoupa before nightfall, there was no time to be lost; so without delay we marshalled our file, the cutlass-bearers in front, the heavier-laden baggage-bearers in the rear, and off we started on foot, to toil onwards as we best might until the evening. A walk of this kind, through a pathless wilderness of mountain and forest, offers much to interest and much to amuse, though at the same time much to weary, those who undertake it; but a detailed description would, I fear, tend rather to produce the latter than either of the former feelings in the reader. A mere sketch may therefore suffice.

For some miles our ascent lay under a green canopy of glistening leaves, sixty, eighty, or a hundred feet above our heads, and between giant tree trunks, smooth and stately, ornamented, or rather garlanded, each one with lovely creepers, parasitical ferns and mosses, and strange twining growths that might in form and colour have furnished hints or models for the most exquisite patterns that ever decorated china or glass. During this part of the journey our chief, indeed our only

annoyance, the inevitable fatigue of climbing excepted, arose from the multitudinous snare-work of roots that twined and twisted like snakes in every direction along and across the way to entangle and trip up whoever did not take care to direct his eye before his foot. Once past the Laudat gardens no trace of man or man's work was visible for the rest of our journey. As the ground continued to rise the forest trees diminished in height and size, while, on the contrary, the undergrowth of bush, often troublesome from its thorns and prickles, continued to grow denser and denser, till we reached the margin of a deep ravine, down which a rapid stream rushed on its way to join the Roseau river.

Here the character of our march changed, the continuous slope up which we had thus far climbed giving place to a succession of the abruptest gullies that it has ever been my lot to traverse. Hands and feet were alike in requisition as we toiled onwards, now clinging for help to the small tree trunks amid which we forced our passage, at the continual risk of laying hold of some deceptive bough, rotten in all but its outward bark; or, worse still, catching for support at a prickly stem that pierced fingers and hand with its sharp needles; till when, after several hundred feet of a climb that might have done honour to the most dare-devil of Marryat's midshipmen, we found ourselves at the top of the ridge, it was only to begin over again, after an interval of hardly a yard's breadth, a descent, steeper, if possible, and more venturesome than the preliminary ascent had been. This manœuvre we repeated some half a dozen times, every ridge being somewhat higher than the one passed, with the occasional unpleasant variation of having to follow up some torrent, pent in between perpendicular crags on either side, where we made our way by jumping, gracefully or otherwise, from one slippery boulder of volcanic rock to another, at a tolerable risk of dislocated or broken limbs, and frequently sliding off knee deep into the water that foamed and roared around. "What idiots we should look were there anyone by to see us!" was the thought that occurred to me again and again as we performed fantastic capers in the

grasshopper style, or rivalled the postures of a band of clambering spider-monkeys, minus their prehensile tails. Possibly the same thought may have crossed the minds of my companions also; but except an occasional English monosyllable, the same, it might be, that Byron declares to have no like for emphasis in any other language, and Blake considers to have a very bracing and beneficial effect, when any small misadventure, such as a slip, a fall, a wounded hand or foot, or the like bad hap befell one or other of the climbers, I think nothing but what was heroic and befitting heroic deeds was said or sung by any individual of our party—at least, among its European contingent. The blacks and half-blacks laughed at everything and nothing; but that was with them a matter rather of habit, I fear, than of heroism; while ever and anon a mocking bird from behind its leafy screen laughed securely at us all.

The sun's rays, visible at rare intervals through the dense wood, were fast slanting to a level, when, after a long and weary struggle up the highermost gully, we stood at last on the central ridge of the island, looking down on either side to west and east: to west, where the low sun brightened into one dazzling glass the now distant Caribbean sea; to the east, where steep mountain tops sunk rapidly down one below another to the restless, white-waved Atlantic. A little further on we plunged again into a labyrinth of small trees thickly planted in a deep layer of decaying vegetable matter, intermixed with slender bamboo tufts, where we were hardly able to make out the right direction of our path amid the maze of green young trunks; till from in front a light suddenly broke in on us, as though there was nothing but open sky before, and so in fact it was. All at once, with hardly a warning, we stepped out of the continuous forest, right upon the edge of a sheer precipice several hundred feet in height; while below us lay a huge valley, or rather gulf, reeking in every part with thick white sulphur vapours that rose from the depths and curled up the bares sides of the abyss. Holding on to each other's hands, or to the shrubs that grew nearest the edge, we leaned over as

far as we dared, gazing down into the steamy chasm below, and resembling in a general way the Dantes and Virgils of Flaxman's statuesque outlines, where they bend over the margin of Malebolge, it may be, or of the awful bridge that spans the infernal gulf.

Now, indeed, we had before us the Grande Soufrière; but how were we to descend and explore its depths? In front was a sheer precipice of volcanic rock and hardened ash intermixed, a naked crag suggestive of almost certain falls and broken bones on the rocks below, and down the face of which the *Antiquary's* Lovel himself would hardly have ventured, though the rescue of an Isabel Wardour had depended on the trial. This very descent, however, such is the ardour of first discovery, Dr. Nicholls and his companions had once hazarded, but only once, glad on a second visit to have discovered a longer but less dangerous track, that, winding half-way round the crater, leads to a slope, sufficiently abrupt in all conscience, but conveniently clad with vegetation down to the immediate neighbourhood of the sulphur sources.

This path we unanimously resolved to try once more; and after much cutlass work among the tangled bush growth, and many involuntary gymnastic feats of the kind described already, we finally reached the lower ledge, on which we had fore-determined to pass the night. Great was our joy to find, just as darkness was closing in, the identical ajoupa erected so long ago, sheltered from the chances of storm by overarching trees, and strengthened by the indestructible vitality of its own materials; every stake, every support, having taken root in the rich soil, and now throwing out foliage and branches enough to form a living roof in place of the dead thatch and dried leaves which still partly covered it. Here we lighted our fires, and while our supper of cabbage-palm, salt fish, and other West Indian delicacies, was preparing, listened to the bubbling roar and frequent explosions of the sulphur-sources, now not a hundred yards below, watched the large fire-flies as they glanced between the trees, and inhaled, along with the more congenial smoke of tobacco, frequent whiffs of sulphur vapour;

while every article of silver on our persons, watch, chain, stud, coin, or whatever it might be, turned black in the fuming atmosphere of the gulf which now shut us in among its depths. To say we had a merry evening and a sound sleep afterwards in spite of vocal tree-frogs, huge crickets, and other wood insects, probably of the beetle family, whose hard toil did not, it seemed, divide the night from the day, or rather rendered the former the noisier of the two, would be unnecessary for those who know what is meant by a long day's march and a camping out in the forest. As for those who do not know, let them try; they will be all the better for it.

Next morning we were up betimes, and partly by our own efforts, partly by sheer compliance with the laws of gravitation, descended the lower bank, and soon found ourselves on the soft ash-bed that paves the half-extinct crater. From innumerable sources, large and small, some sulphur-encrusted with bright yellow, others blood red with iron oxide, or white with insoluble salt, magnesium principally, I believe, there gushed up a mixture of boiling water and steam, amid a constant tumult of noises, hissings, bubblings, explodings—here more, there less—throughout the whole extent of the gulf. The waters, white, black, and red, mingling at the lower end of the valley, rushed out in a strong torrent, scalding hot, and steaming as they went; in many places the vapour-cloud formed a thick impenetrable veil; no plant but an ugly bluish-coloured broad-leaved Clusia grew for some distance around the blighting fumes.

We did all that is customary for travellers to do; tested the heat of some sources, irritated others by attempts at choking them up with stones; thrust sticks into the yellow paste of ash and sulphur, over which, in many places, the foot cannot safely tread; gathered specimens of the various deposits; and, above all, admired the lonely, demoniacal grandeur of this semi-infernal hollow; till, remembering that the "Boiling Lake" was yet unvisited, we renewed our way, picking our steps carefully among scalding pools and over the treacherous sulphur crust that rang hollow to the tread; till we reached the main exit of the soufrière waters at the lower end of the crater.

For a little distance we then followed the torrent's course, that struggled seawards through a narrow gully, rendered unpleasantly warm by the vapour of the particoloured water reeking from its source, and yet further heated by a steaming milk-white cascade that leapt down in a giant curve, not unlike the outline of the Swiss Giessbach, from the cliff on our right; while to the left an isolated but noisy sulphur vent smoked like a dozen united limekilns. The "Black Country," of Wolverhampton notoriety, is a weird place, and suggests weird ideas enough, whether traversed by night or by day; but it is "mild-domestic" compared to Nature's own "White country," the sulphur region of Dominica. A world like this abandoned to volcanic agencies, as *e.g.*, the moon is supposed to have been at some unlucky epoch of her existence, would be a more fitting abode than even the biblical Babylon for the satyrs, dragons, and other doleful creatures of the prophet, a throne for Arimanes himself.

Turning north-east we clambered for an hour or so, first across a knife-like dividing ridge, and then among the broken hollows of a second crater or soufrière, considerably larger in dimensions than the first, but comparatively quiescent; a silent burnt-out region of ash and sulphur, surrounded by high bare walls of pumice and volcanic crag. Little steam was here visible, nor were any explosions to be heard from underneath; but the many springs of white, yellow, red or black water that pierced and furrowed the spongy crust in every direction were all hot, and told of fires still smouldering at no great distance below. In front of us rose a bare ridge of heaped-up pumice and ash, shutting off the southerly segment of the great crater as though with a partition wall; and from behind its range, vast columns of steam whitened against the dazzling blue of the cloudless sky. We took the intervening barrier at a run; and checked ourselves short at the top; a few steps more would have sent us head foremost into the Boiling Lake.

A strange sight to see, and not less awful than strange. Fenced in by steep, mostly indeed perpendicular banks, varying from sixty to a hundred feet high, cut out in ash and pumice,

the lake rages and roars like a wild beast in its cage; the surface, to which such measurements as we could make assigned about two hundred yards in length by more than half the same amount in breadth, is that of a gigantic seething cauldron covered with rapid steam, through which, when the veil is for a moment blown apart by the mountain breeze, appears a confused mass of tossing waves, crossing and clashing in every direction—a chaos of boiling waters. Towards the centre, where the ebullition is at its fiercest, geyser-like masses are being constantly thrown up to the height of several feet, not on one exact spot, but shifting from side to side, each fresh burst being preceded by a noise like that of cannon fired off at some great depth below; while lesser jets often suddenly make their appearance nearer the sides of the lake. What the general depth of the water may be would be difficult to ascertain; but a line stretched out over the edge from the end of a pole indicates a sheer descent of fifty or sixty feet within a couple of yards distance from the shore. The heat of the water, where it beats in seething restlessness on the cliff, is 185° F.; we tied a thermometer to a stick and found the surface temperature at the distance of a few feet further on to be almost 200° F. The height of the lake above the sea is a little over 2400 feet; an elevation which, at an average atmosphere temperature of 64°, gives the boiling point for water at 207° F., or near it.

The lake is evidently supplied for the most part from springs that well up within its own circuit; but a little stream, formed by the union of two mountain rivulets, runs down from the heights to the north; the water of the brook is cold, and may contribute somewhat, especially in the rainy season, to the volume of the lake. The addition must, however, be slight; for the highest water-line along the cliffs, marked partly by erosion, partly by a bright yellow band of sulphur deposit, was at the epoch of our visit, that is, at the conclusion of the dry season in Dominica, only a few inches above the actual water-level; an additional proof that the lake is almost wholly supplied from below. In fact the only appreciable effect of a heavy rain shower or an augmented inflow is said to be a sudden increase in the violence

of the surface action, the result doubtless of the shock produced by the meeting of such very opposite temperatures.

This torrent, by the stones and earth brought down with it in its descent, has formed a slope which, though steep, permits of a cautious approach to the water's edge; everywhere else the cliffs are absolutely perpendicular; but gradually lessen in height towards the southern extremity, where a gate-like rent has been formed, through which the waters rush out in a scalding torrent, and bear their heat with them far down the mountain sides, as they seek the Eastern Sea at Mulatto Point. No vegetation, except the dreary Clusia before spoken of, with a dingy kind of moss, and a not more cheerful-looking growth of Pitcairnia, exists within the immediate range of the heated sulphureous vapours; but on looking round we see the further background closed in by noble forests, like those we had traversed on our way hither. To the south-east the prospect offers a rapid descent from height to height, each clothed in woods. The island shore itself is hidden from sight by the steep perspective line; but beyond it the calm sea mirror comes in view, and further yet the northern extremity of Martinique, its yellowing cane-fields distinctly visible, though more than thirty miles distant, through the pure transparent atmosphere. Above us was the deep azure of the sky, veiled ever and anon by massive wreaths of steam, that ceaselessly rose in capricious swirls, to be caught up and scattered by the trade-winds, then to reunite in one dense canopy overhead. Seen from a distance these steam-wreaths form the cloud so often noticed by seafarers as they coast along the southerly shore of Dominica, and look high up to the rugged crest of the Grande Soufrière.

Here we remained, as long as prudence and the mindfulness of the long and difficult route that lay behind us permitted, in wondering delight; tried to walk round the lake along the cliffs, but could not manage it; took measurements; tested the heat of the water; irritated the geyser-like action, where not too far from the margin, by throwing down stones, which were followed, after nearly a minute's interval, by the usual result of a more violent ebullition than customary; and lastly, attempted sketches

from several points of view; but found the attempt to be a pursuit of art under difficulties, amid the blinding steam and pungent vapour.

I wish that I had some interesting legend to recount connected with the spot; and for such we curiously inquired, but in vain, from our dusky attendants. No negro, no Carib tradition adds the wonders of imagination to those of fact; no story of past demi-god or devil, of nymph or neckar, assigns an origin or a history to the lake. Yet superstitious beliefs and tales of all kinds abound among the negroes of Dominica no less than of every other West Indian island; and stories of the kind are often attached to localities and surroundings of much less extraordinary or rather of the most ordinary and prosaic character. A highway corner, a tree on the village green, a piece of ruined wall, has its "jumby," its "duppy," its apparition, its haunting power; while the deep forest, the mountain cave, the wild ravine, the gloomy hollow, remain untenanted by the creations of preternatural belief. But thus it often is, not in the West Indies nor among negroes only, but under other skies and among other races. Whether the seeming anomaly tells against the Buckle theory of man's passivity to natural law, or whether it can be accounted for by that very law, and so brought into accordance with the general system of the experimental school, I cannot say; indeed to investigate a question of so indefinite a character would be not less laborious than unprofitable. But certainly the amount and the quality of local superstition have, in countless instances, nothing to do with the very circumstances to which the philosophers of that school would most readily ascribe their origin and shape. The Egyptian, on his level, uniform strip of plain, beside a river regular as clock-work in its annual variations, and under a sky unvaried by cloud or storm, is brimful of the beliefs we term superstitions; "Afreets," "Ghouls," "Kotrobs," and a hundred other chimeras dire, of names to make even a German orientalist stare and gasp, these are to the natives of the Nile valley things of every-day occurrence, realities of common life, not so much credited as experienced, witnessed, known. Meanwhile

the Swiss peasant, amid the wildest scenery of mountain and forest, the most varied and startling phenomena of climate and season, has scarcely—except perhaps in a manufactured novel—a story of the kind to recount. Russian folklore, that demoniacal menagerie of strange shapes and preternatural existences, has been elaborated amid the most undiversified, the dreariest monotony of scenery that Europe or Asia can afford; while unimaginative legends of saints and virgins, pale transcripts at most, equally devoid of feeling and of originality, are all that the romantic and awe-inspiring scenery of Spain has given to the world. Just so, to adduce an oft-noted illustration, the most exquisitely carved and choicely painted images are rarely the objects of popular devotion, or accredited with supernatural power; while the miracles of some discoloured daub, or very commonplace doll, are reckoned by thousands. Either, then, it would seem, the source, the origin, of these strange imagings is wholly within us ourselves, or if without us, it is something not to be analysed or explained by actual sense.

Be this as it may, the Boiling Lake has, for aught that we could discover, remained a mere natural phenomenon for Indians and Creoles no less than for Europeans, up to the present day; and when we were about, however reluctantly, to take our leave of this wonder-abounding spot, and one of our attendant negroes, turning back, addressed the vaporous gulf with a cabalistic "Salaam-Aleykum" picked up from some African cousin of Mohammedan origin, he gave the first and only expression of preternatural awe awakened by the view.

For ourselves a more prosaic consideration suggested itself to our minds, as, tired with rambling and scrambling (there is high authority just now for dualistic phrases of the sort, and my readers may pass me this one), we rested ourselves by a little spring, not far from our ajoupa, in a narrow hill-shaded glen, and drank the chalybeate waters, sparkling with carbonic gas, that welled up at our feet, amid a matted growth of golden fern, wild flowers, and giant moss. What a magnificent sanatorium might not be erected here, beside the waters, sulphureous or ferruginous, of every temperature, every quality, for bath or

drink, here, amid the pure cool atmosphere of the heights, an atmosphere that might alone seem a sufficient restorative for impaired health, and strength exhausted by the lowland heats. By the margin of sources absolutely unimportant and inefficient compared to these, the French colonists of Martinique have erected the baths and sanatoriums of the Eaux du Précheur, the Eaux Didier, and the Eaux St. Michel; and yet are they not in this respect almost outstripped by the Anatolian Turk, who has constructed cupolas and lodging apartments by the side of every "Ilijeh," or "Healing," as he names the hot mineral springs of his nature-favoured land? Have we then yet to take sanitary lessons from the Turk? or to learn from the French the right use to be made of the goods the gods provide us?

But it is not man only, it is Nature herself that is principally here in fault. She has, in the Grande Soufrière and Boiling Lake of Dominica, fenced in her treasures with such rugged barriers, interposed so many obstacles to access, that all the financial resources of the Leeward Confederation, and of the Windward too—if our Barbadian friends ever permit its formation—would fail to make, not a carriage-road, but even a tolerable bridle-path from the coast up to these heights. "Once in a twelvemonth is enough for an expedition like this," was the unanimous verdict of our party when, in the dusk of evening, we at last reached Laudat, and found ourselves with just enough strength remaining to mount our horses and ride slowly down the Roseau valley, partly illuminated by a crescent moon, and more so by innumerable fire-flies, each a living burning lamp, and so re-entered Roseau late on the second night after our departure. Many others than ourselves will, I hope, in the course of time visit what we visited, and admire what we admired; but none will, I think, enjoy themselves more, or carry away pleasanter recollections, not of scenery and Soufrière only, but of cheerful companions and good fellowship, that it was our fortune to do.

MALAY LIFE IN THE PHILIPPINES.

I have sincere pleasure in republishing, and trust that my readers may have as much in reperusing, the following Essay. It recalls to me a land and a people who both come nearer to what, in my idea, this world of ours and its inhabitants ought to be than perhaps any others that I am acquainted with. To climate, position, geological formation and the like circumstances the land owes its excellence; the inhabitants theirs more than anything else, I think, to a healthy Conservatism, and a happy immunity from the virus inoculation of improvement and progress. Good in themselves and their surroundings, they have wisely kept aloof from that worst enemy of Good and Well-being, the Better. Perhaps they too will, at no distant date, be drawn into the general vortex, and learn, with and from European or North-American teachers the desire to be better, or, in the accepted phrase, to "better themselves," with the inevitable result that they will be worse and worse off. Indeed, I am told that since 1876, the year when this Essay was first published, some "improvement" has already taken place in the Philippines: the introduction in some measure of railroads, machinery, foreign capital, etc. being meant. If so, I can only regret it, and hope that there is as little of it as possible. But even Acrasia's guarded garden must sooner or later be wasted by its inevitable Guion, and that yet more odious prig, his Palmer companion.

A word more is here necessary. Religion, that is the phenomenal form of the metaphysical life, takes so prominent a position in the Malayo-Philippine landscape that occasional mention of one or other of its special manifestations was inevitable in a descriptive essay. I have accepted it accordingly as a fact among other facts, a surface tint of a surface view. With the underlying depths of this or any other phenomenon my Essay has nothing to do; the reader is as free to suppose his own groundwork as I mine. But this is precisely what all sensible people, as our banker-poet of "Italy" so justly remarked, always keep to themselves.

IMPATIENT to be already at the term of his voyage, the homeward-bound passenger is generally, nor least so at the hurried moment of final parting, under a spell that blots out from the scroll of his "Pleasures of Memory" the records of whole years,

it may be, of happy residence in the lands that he is leaving; and all by the fresh contrast of lively anticipation of what, too often in fancy only, awaits him in the land, his native home, that lies before. True it is also that some shores there are—though to specify such would be invidious—which the longer one has sojourned on them, the keener the satisfaction one feels on leaving them without thought of return. Not so the "Isles of the East," the Philippines. Dull indeed must be his soul, unsympathetic his nature, who, whatever the hopes that may smile on him from the vista of his journey's further end, can stand as I do now on the deck of the Singapore-ward steamer, the little *Leite*, and see the forests and mountains of Luzon, Queen of the Eastern Isles, fade away into dim violet outlines on the fast receding horizon, without some wishful remembrance some pang of longing regret.

It is not only that Nature—or shall we say "Hertha?"—so niggard often of her gifts, has here lavished them rather than bestowed; though indeed not the Ægæan, not the West-Indian, not the Samoan, not any other of the fair island-clusters by which our terraqueous planet half atones for her dreary expanses of grey ocean and monotonous desert elsewhere, can rival in manifold beauties of earth, sea, sky, the Philippine Archipelago from the extreme northern verge of the Formosan channel to where the tepid equatorial wave sinks faint on the coral-reefs of Borneo; nor in all that Archipelago, lovely as it is through its entire extent, can any island vie with the glories of Luzon. Set out eastwards from Manila, the tropical Venice amid her labyrinth of estuaries and canals, daily ebbing and flowing to the tides of the vast harbour-gulf, the secure vestibule of the typhoon-swept China seas; thence pass inland between the broad shades of clustered bamboo and palm up the eddying Pasig river to where, apt starting-point of its romantic course, it issues from the wide freshwater lake of Baï, girdled by a hundred miles and more of varied, ever-fertile shore-line, and the cloud-capped peaks of the giant Mahahai range beyond; traverse the yellow cane-fields of the wealthy Laguna district to where, hid among the hills and coffee-groves of Batangas lies

deep the blue cliff-encircled lake of Taal, and amid its waters the fairy islet where, from the miniature central volcano, a shifting pennon of restless smoke and fire ever rises and spreads high over greensward and glossy tree; then across the rushing rivers, sounding waterfalls, and dark woods of Tayabas and the mid-chain, till, between slim tree-fern, and over forest-clad descent, the boundless Pacific opens out its sparkling blue; and right from the very breakers on the shore towers eight thousand feet in air the perfect volcano-cone of Albay, the fire-breathing marvel of these islands, as the classical Fusihama of Japan.

I have taken, almost at chance, the first route that offered; Luzon has a hundred more, each different, and each as fair. Nor inferior in intrinsic beauty, though on a smaller scale, are the scenes that the comparatively lesser islands, such as Panay, Cebu, Samar, Negros, Leite, and others of names strange to the generality of European ears, have to show. More fortunate than their West-Indian sisters, no flat and chalky Barbados, no drought-stricken Antigua, no barren Virgin Island mars the perfection of the Philippine group; while Jamaica and Santa Lucia themselves, those loveliest of the Antilles, must yield the palm of beauty to the mere average of the "Eastern Isles." Volcanic formation and soil, an abundant yearly rainfall, an equable climate, and the life-giving influences of the oceanic tropics have all combined here to do this, and it is marvellous in our, the beholders', eyes.

Marvellous in our eyes, impossible, not to be imaged, in the eyes of those who have only word-painting and imagination out of which to construct the view. Tropical scenery, be it of mountain or plain, forest or coast-line, lake or river, can no more be realised by those who have never seen it than colours by the blind, music by the deaf. A Kingsley attempts the picture, and behold a confused description of a Kew palm-house; a Michael Scott, and lo! the side-scenes of a theatre. The scientific accuracy of a Wallace, and of his compeers, if there be any worthy of the name, may supply a correct outline; but even this must be filled up by remembrance, or supplemented by engraving. Pity that for the Philippines themselves no word-

limner of note exists, to my knowledge at least, except the coarse, narrow-souled Jagor, of whose book, or libel rather, it is enough to say that the letter-press and the sketches are worthy of each other, and each not likenesses but caricatures. The want however is one that, for the time at least, must remain unfulfilled; the subject, even were it accessible to my grasp, does not come within the scope of a writing like the present.

For, when all is said and done, the prime history of a country lies not in the land itself but in the inhabitants of the land; where they are unworthy of the beauties around them, the fairest scenery fails to charm; as, on the contrary, a noble people can cast a glamour of attractiveness over the dullest landscape. The barren rocks of Attica, the dreary plains of Rome, nay, the unsightly marshes of Holland are loved for their hero-children, while the gorgeous panoramas of Rio and Valparaiso, Yosemite gorges and Niagara chiefly suggest a feeling of dissatisfaction with the unequal inferiority of their vanished autochthones, or their present occupants. The chiefest, the almost exceptional spell of the Philippines is situate, not in lake or volcano, forest or plain, but in the races that form the bulk of the island population, the "Indians" as Spanish guilelessness of ethnography persists in misnaming them, the Malays of descent and fact.

I said "almost exceptional," because rarely is an intra-tropical people a satisfactory one to eye or mind; witness the average negro of Western Africa, the Carib of Central America, the Sinhalee of Ceylon. Extreme heat, as extreme cold, are both, though in different ways, generally unfavourable to a successful development, physical or intellectual, of the human species. But this cannot be said of the Philippine Malays, who in bodily formation and mental characteristics alike may fairly claim a place not among the middling ones merely but almost among the higher names inscribed on the world's national scale; and though not exactly a superior are eminently an estimable, pre-eminently an amiable race.

Of the Spaniards, the conquerors and administrators of this great Archipelago, in which however not ten thousand of their

number have even a passing residence throughout its whole extent, of the English, an honourable, and in numbers as in wealth a not inconsiderable amount, of the more numerous nor unimportant Chinese settlers domiciled here, and of that curious aboriginal remnant, the "Negritos," savages akin, it would seem, to the natives of Andaman, and like them shrinking, perhaps with prudential self-preserving instinct, from the contact of the "nobler," at any rate the stronger, races, no direct notice shall be taken here. Indeed of the eight millions, so runs the admitted though only approximate census, that inhabit the Philippines, Europeans, Chinese, all foreigners whosoever taken together, do not make up a hundredth part; nor do the thinly scattered and unprolific Negritos add much to the extra-Malayan muster. Nor again, in a general sketch like this, do the varieties offered by the Philippino-Malayan population within itself require more than a passing indication. The chief are three, which correspond with tolerable geographical exactness to a triple division of the Archipelago into Northern, Central, and Southern. Thus, the Ilocan Malays occupy the North, the Tagals the centre, and the Visaians the south. Of these three sub-races, the first-named are the largest and sturdiest in physical build, but of lower mental average and less general adaptability than the two others; the second, a smaller-statured, darker-complexioned, and sinewy race, are distinguished above all others for energy of character, intelligence, and perseverance; the Visaians, graceful even to beauty in form and gentle in manner, differ little in natural capacity and endowments from the better sort of their congeners in Borneo. Derived from or ingrafted on these three main branches are many lesser sprays. Some, especially in North and Central Luzon, owe their differentiation, if reliance can be placed on the testimony of bodily lineaments and historical evidence combined, to a strong infusion of Chinese, Formosan, and even Japanese blood; others, the Bicols for instance, on the eastern shores of the island, display an evidently Polynesian or Papuan admixture; while in the huge southerly island of Mindanao, scarcely inferior to Luzon itself in dimensions, a population closely resembling the

Dyaks of Borneo is reported to exist. But the persistent, strongly-marked Malay type, whether absolutely pure as among the Visaians, or dashed with foreign strain, here more, here less, as is the case among the Tagals, Ilocans, and their sub-branches, predominates in all.

Once recognised, that type can never be mistaken; and it alone would, even in the absence of other testimony, suffice to assert the Mongolian clanship of the Malay. The rounded head, the small but expressive black eye, with its slight upward and outward turn, the straight dark hair, smooth skin, and small extremities, hands and feet, are not less distinctly the physical countersigns of Turanian origin than are the tenacious purpose, the organising and yet more the cohesive power, the limited inventiveness, and the more than conservative immutability, its mental characteristics. Add to these a concentrated, never-absent self-respect, with—its natural result—a habitual self-restraint in word and deed, then only, and that very rarely, broken through when extreme provocation induces the transitory but fatal frenzy known as "amok," and in one deadly hour the Malay casts to the winds every feeling, every thought except that of bloody, indiscriminating revenge; add an inbred courtesy, equably diffused through all classes low or high, unfailing decorum, prudence, caution, quiet cheerfulness, ready hospitality, a correct though not an inventive taste, and a marked tendency to ancestral worship: such are, as described by the keenest of observers and most truthful of narrators, in his *Malay Archipelago*, the general attributes of the Malay race; and such are abundantly shared in by the inhabitants of the Philippines, though here they have undergone certain modifications, some favourable, some the reverse.

These modifications are, as might be anticipated, due principally to two important circumstances: the one, that the Philippine Malays have for now three full centuries been subject to European, *i.e.* Spanish rule; the second, that they have for an equal length of time followed the religion of their conquerors, the Roman Catholic form of Christianity. Other things, climate, trade, wars, immigrations, and the like have no

doubt had their effect, but in subordinate measure; the climate differing little from that of the not distant Equatorial islands and peninsula, while the isolated and isolating character of Spanish colonial policy has left comparatively little play to the action of trade or war; immigration has been considered already.

How far then has Malay nationality submitted to be modified by Spanish influence and institutions, how far has it, instinctively or deliberately, declined them? A visit to any one of the large villages or "pueblos" in the populous provinces of Pampangas, Laguna, or Batangas, all of them within easy reach of the Government centre, Manila, will best help us to decide.

It is the morning—needless to say in a climate like this a clear and bright one—of the village patronal "Fiesta;" each village from Taal, with its sixty thousand inhabitants, down to the smallest hamlet of half a dozen families, has its "Fiesta," one at least, not rarely two, in the course of the year, over and above the stated holiday-making of Sundays and the many other days marked for idleness and pleasure in the Philippine calendar. The open space, corresponding to our own village green, and here always in front of the church, is thronged with people, men, women, and children; while a number of the light native-constructed jaunting-cars, or "caramatas," not unlike our own market carts, but canopied, and of slighter build, that have brought hither the more distant sharers in the day's festivity, are waiting beside by scores, jumbled up with wickerwork waggons, wheelless bamboo trucks, and two or three shabby open carriages of European construction, in which some wealthier native, or "mestizo," *i.e.* half-caste, family has arrived, in careless confusion.

A word about these "mestizos." Not often the result of Spanish intermarriage, they are very commonly of semi-Chinese origin; a complexion fairer than the average, a greater breadth of forehead and feature, and a marked tendency to obesity, are their most ordinary distinctive marks. Intellectually they are generally somewhat the superiors of the unmixed natives around them. Their number, taken in comparison with that of the

entire population, is not great; but their wealth and influence go far to make up this deficiency. I return to the Malays proper.

Thickly grouped before the church porch and around the building, the men, lithe, middle-sized, and ruddy-brown of various shades, are dressed, if of the better sort, in loose shirts or blouses, home-manufactured from the finest fibre of the "abaca," or Manila hemp, as the plant (really a sterile variety of the ordinary fruit-bearing banana) is called; or, more delicate yet from "pina," the pine-apple leaf texture, airy as the choicest lace, the peculiar workmanship of the Philippines. White, or light yellow, and interwoven sometimes with flower-patterns, more generally with brilliant stripes of Chinese silk, red, yellow, green, or blue, the "baro," or blouse, is an essentially national dress, though in the neighbourhood of Manila modified too often into an uncouth resemblance of a European shirt. Beneath it a pair of white or light-coloured trousers are belted round the waist; the feet, usually bare, or protected by sandals at most, are on occasions like this not seldom encased in patent-leather boots of Spanish fashion; the head is protected by the "salacot," a round, mushroom-like hat, of about a foot in diameter, close plaited in grey and black intersecting patterns of tough "nito" or liana fibre; the circumference tastefully ornamented with silver bands and flowerets, an excellent and picturesque sun-shade, ill exchanged, though, happily, but seldom, for the European hat of silk or straw. The poorer classes wear a like dress, but of coarser materials, in which red or orange commonly predominate, and on the head a "salacot" devoid of ornaments. But while the men's attire, though national in the main, shows occasional tokens of European influence, the women, with wise conservatism, retain their graceful Malay costume unaltered as of old. Wrapped in the many-coloured folds of the silken "saya," or "sarong," and over it a second, but narrower, waist-cloth, also of silk, reaching down to the knees, and dark in hue; her breast and shoulders covered with delicate "pina" texture, while the matchless abundance of her raven hair ripples from under a white snooded kerchief far down her back, not seldom

to her very heels, a Malay woman could hardly, even did she wish it, improve on the toilette bequeathed by her ancestors. Silver or gold ornaments are not much in feminine use. It is true that the Malay type of face is generally too flat for regular beauty, and the eye, though larger than the Chinese, is seldom full-sized; but many of the younger women are decidedly pretty, a few lovely, and a habitual look of smiling good-nature goes far to render pleasing the less nature-favoured faces. Their complexion is a clear brown, sometimes hardly darker than that of an ordinary South European brunette. Children, absolutely naked, or with a light and scanty shirt for sole covering, mix fearlessly but quietly in the throng; early trained by precept and example to good manners, they show less disposition to noise and mischief than is ordinary elsewhere at their age.

Such are the festival-makers. The church-buildings, including a spacious presbytery, are generally the design and construction of the parish priest himself, who has in them maintained a traditional adaptation of the "renaissance" style of his own Spanish peninsula. The frequency of earthquakes in this volcanic region counsels low side walls, flanked by ponderous buttresses; a massive octangular bell-tower, with indications of good taste and architectural feeling in its proportions and details, is usually the best feature of the whole.

Within the church the rites and ceremonies of the day—a Malay sermon delivered by one or other of the officiating priests excepted—are much what they might be in any small provincial town of Spain itself. But the music, contributed by a native brass band, is not European merely, but, the most of it, operatic. The "Gloria" is accompanied by an inspiriting air of the "Trovatore," the "Credo" cheered by a melodious adaptation from the "Barbiere," and the host elevated to a passionate outburst of the "Traviata." But whatever may be thought of the suitableness of the music to the occasion and place, it meets beyond a doubt all the æsthetic requirements of the worshippers, and is well executed besides. Not a village of any importance throughout the length and breadth of the Philippines but has

its band of carefully selected and expensive brass instruments, and skilled players to match; for, next to his fighting-cock, of which more anon, music is the dearest solace of the Philippine Malay; and the ex-bandmasters of the numerous native regiments here maintained by the Spaniards are always ready to hire out their services as professors of the art wherever wanted. Of the original native music, prior in date to the Spanish conquest, little now remains; its connection with an older Paganism, perhaps patriotism, having caused it to be proscribed and carefully put down by the later clergy; two such airs I had however a chance opportunity of hearing; they were of a sentimental and somewhat pathetic character.

Inside and without the church decorations testify to Mariolatry, Hagiolatry, and the entire system habitually branded by those who wish to give it a bad name as "idolatry," "man-worship," "creature-worship," and the like, here carried out to its extremest limits, and constituting in practice nine-tenths, or rather more, of the religion of the land. It is a religion admirably adapted to the requirements of the people, and proportionately beneficial. Ancestor-worship in one form or other has ever been, as Mr. Fergusson correctly remarks, and yet is, the favourite expression of religious feeling among Turanian races; and the Malays, themselves the southernmost branch of the great ethnical tree, are no exceptions to the rule. Here in the Philippines they have, with the easy pliancy in such matters that once covered the equatorial island-group with Brahminical temples, and facilitated the spread of Buddhism among their cousins of China and Japan, adopted without questioning the Catholic-Christian system, and placed its mythico-historical virgins, saints, and martyrs at the head of the unseen kingdom already tenanted by their own proper ancestors and relatives, till they now rejoice in the possession of a well-stocked Olympian Valhalla, sufficient to their sympathies and hopes. Engrafted thus on a genuine indigenous stem, the more recent and exotic religion, while retaining much of its own peculiar form in flower and fruit, derives its local energy and development from the unfailing sap of the national mind; no longer foreign but

native, believed in sooner than taught, an integral part of daily life, not a plastered-on addition, it affords so far an absolute contrast to the "musical bank currency" of the European Erewhons of our age, and is itself a not inconsiderable part of the genuine circulating medium of Philippine society. Hence as a social bond, a humanising influence, an effective sanction, a promoter of friendly intercourse, of right, of love even, a poetry amid life's commonplace, a balm — ideal perhaps, but not inefficacious—of the wounds and bruises of fact, Christianity has, it would seem, rarely been more advantageous to its followers than here, where it can scarce be distinguished from a well-regulated, genial Asiatic Paganism; a riddle harder to read in appearance than in reality.

This is not the place for me to enter on the perilous field of the strange abnormal practices and beliefs, survivals of a much older creed, that subsist and smoulder on throughout the Archipelago, and even within the immediate neighbourhood of Manila itself, its convents and cathedral, beneath the Christianised surface, though rarely obtruding themselves on European observation; Cybelian priesthoods, Cotyttian rites, repressed but not obliterated, and to which the past history of other nations, perhaps the present, offers many a parallel. Enough that such things are; their investigation, though of deep anthropological interest, is foreign to my present scope, which extends only over the usual, not the exceptional, the recognised, not the concealed and disavowed phases of Philippine society and life.

Mass is ended; the "Royal March" of Spanish celebrity has dismissed the congregation; and while we stand a little apart and watch the bright-coloured crowds issuing dense but orderly from the church portal, the native "Gubernadorcillo," or "Capitan," the Headman of the village community, observes and approaches us. The ensigns of his office are few, and those chiefly Spanish; a short jacket of black cloth, worn, unbecomingly enough, over the indispensable blouse, a thin staff tipped with silver or gold, sometimes—though, heaven be praised, rarely—a European hat, distinguish the great man. Probably he himself is forty years old or more, but his general appearance,

features, form, and bearing, would designate him at first sight for a lad of barely twenty; and indeed the closest inspection may not rarely fail in determining his real age. This extraordinary semblance of juvenility, prolonged far into middle life, is not merely due to the beardless face, where a slight mustachio is commonly enough the only hair-growth even up to advanced life, but more to the smooth, smiling, unworn features, where neither care nor passion seem to have left a trace, and partly to the uprightness of stature and well-proportioned roundness of limb maintained to the very confines of senility—a fitting exterior to the calm, unexcitable, moderated character within, and not unparalleled among the Chinese, Japanese, and other Turanian tribes. It is almost a pity that early and frequently recurring maternity too generally deprives—though not uncompensating after a fashion for what it takes—the Malay women of a physical advantage more to the purpose in their sex than in the male.

Every village, large or small, is headed by its "Capitan," a native of the place or district, elected in accordance with immemorial custom for two years' office by the villagers themselves, subject, of course, to the approbation, seldom withheld, of the "Alcalde," or Spanish Provincial Governor. For the Spaniards wisely enough preferred at their conquest to maintain and continue in most matters of detail the already existing village, or "Barangai" organisation, rather than to supersede it by novel systems of their own; a matter in which they showed themselves to be better colonisers, than, for instance, the French. But the post of "Capitan," however important, is scarcely an object of rural ambition, as its responsibilities are at least equal to its dignity; while the expenses which custom or duty has rendered obligatory on its holder are too often in excess of its emoluments, legal or not. Hence the not unfrequent "nolo episcopari"—that is, its Tagale quivalent—of a newly-elected "Capitan."

Of even higher authority in every village than the "Capitan" himself is the "Cura," or parish priest. He is in most instances a Spaniard by birth, and enrolled in one or other of the three

great religious orders, Augustinian, Franciscan, or Dominican, established by the conquerors in these islands. But his birth-place, complexion, and habit apart, he is ordinarily as much, sometimes in a manner more, of a native in his sympathies and turn of mind than the natives themselves. This is quite natural. Bound for life to the land of his adoption, with no social, no domestic tie, no anticipated home-return to hold him back from identifying himself with those amongst whom his days are henceforth to be passed, his bones at last to rest, having every interest, the highest as the lowest, in common with the sheep of his pasture, whose fleeces he cannot but desire to guard against all other shears but his own—and, to do him justice, his own do not shear very close—he commonly becomes, and that in the truest and best sense of the term, a very father to his people, and finds in their reverence and affection motive enough to encourage him in continuing to deserve the title. To clerical government, paradoxical as the statement may sound in Modern European ears, the Philippine islands owe, more than to anything else, their internal prosperity, the Malay population its sufficiency and happiness. This it is that again and again has stood a barrier of mercy and justice between the weaker and the stronger race, the vanquished and the victor; this has been the steady protector of the native inhabitants, this their faithful benefactor, their sufficient leader and guide. With the "Cura" for father, and the "Capitan" for his adjutant, a Philippine hamlet feels and knows little of the vexations inseparable from direct and foreign official administration; and if under such a rule "progress," as we love to term it, be rare, disaffection and want are rarer still.

Occasionally the "Cura" is a native by birth, for though excluded by invariable custom and monastic disciplinarianism from the "regular," Malays are admitted readily enough into the ranks of the "secular," or parochial priesthood. But, while pointedly rejecting as the figments of a malevolent imagination the calumnies of Jagor and his like against the morals of the Philippine clergy in general, and the native portion of it in particular, I must admit that the results of Malay ordination are

seldom as satisfactory as could be desired. The Malays have, in their authentic condition, no regular priesthood, as we understand the word, of their own, nor is their temperament suited to it. The office is accordingly best filled among them by foreigners, such at least as religious orders and monasticism, nor least those of the Spanish type, can supply.

But we have almost forgotten our "Capitan," who, with genuine Malay courtesy and self-restraint, has been all this while awaiting in silence and respectful expectation the opportunity of addressing us. This he now does, placing his house at our disposal for the day, and pressingly inviting us to take share in the promised festivities of the evening. Knowing as we do that the house he so liberally offers us will be crowded with visitants of all kinds, on ceremonious compliments or indirect business, we decline the first half of his offer, and request for ourselves some quieter shelter till the evening hour. He complies, and passes us over to one of his wealthier friends, who immediately proceeds to take on himself the duties of host, by vacating in our favour all the best rooms of his own abode, and converting himself and his family into extemporised cooks and servants during our stay.

The house, though ranged in what constitutes the main street of the village, stands by itself; no Malay who can possibly avoid it ever constructing his home in immediate contact with that of another family. The garden which surrounds it, fenced in with wattle, and thick-set with dragon's-blood plants, purple-blossomed creepers, red coral-plants, and white star-like flowerets, makes a pretty show; betel-palms and giant bananas shade the enclosure. Raised on thick pieces of stone or wood to a height of six or eight feet from the ground, the house enjoys an almost free circulation of the outside air beneath its inhabited apartments on the first floor; an arrangement which may possibly be a survival of lacustrine constructions and delta-inhabiting ancestors, but which, now observed throughout the Philippines in the driest up-country heights not less than among the dampest marsh-lands, contributes not a little to popular cleanliness and health. The house itself, that is, the upper story, is

entered by a wide staircase leading into a broad sort of open passage, called the "cahida," facing the street; its windows are composed of small square panes of thin mother-of-pearl, produce of the Sooloo seas, arranged in lattice-work horizontally or diagonally; in this cool verandah-like passage the family usually enjoy their leisure, receive visitors, and exchange gossip with the neighbours. Behind it is a large square central room, all doors and windows, the latter also of mother-of-pearl in sliding frames; here are massed together the costliest articles of furniture owned by the household—chairs, tables, wardrobes, and the rest. As might be expected of a people whose principal constructive material is wood, the Malays display considerable skill and taste in carved work: even the outside decorations round and between the windows and along the string-courses of their buildings are often of much beauty; while indoors their cabinets and sideboards, well-proportioned and elaborately intricate in decorative finish, might not rarely furnish models to be copied or envied by the upholsterers of Europe. The narrow interspaces along the walls of the principal room are decorated with coloured prints, generally Spanish, devotional or historical, as the case may be; and not rarely boast of family portraits, executed by native artists, with all the detail accuracy and all the stiffness and want of perspective that a Chinese painter can accomplish. Glass globes, red and blue, mixed with gay lamps, and perhaps a European chandelier, hang from the ceiling, and a small tinsel-decorated altar or oratory, the Penates of the family, commonly occupies a corner of the apartment. The doors around open into bedrooms, and a bamboo-made passage leads off to the bathroom and kitchen, which is also on the first floor, but at a little distance from the rest of the house.

Abundance of light, though tempered by the semi-opacity of the pearl-shell windows, plenty of fresh air, as much bright colour and ornament as can be had, and scrupulous cleanliness, the broad floor planks being daily scrubbed with plaintain-leaves to a mirror-like polish, and everything dusted twice in the day, such are the chief characteristics of the interior of a Malayo-Philippine house; and amid conditions of the sort, the

general health and longevity of the inhabitants cease to excite surprise. Outside, the appearance of the many-gabled palm-thatched roofs at every variety of pitch, the widely-projecting eaves, the bamboo-interlacements, and carved timber-work of the walls, the chequered panes and little balconies here and there, are very picturesque, and make up a kind of Swiss-cottage ensemble that harmonises well with the local background of hill and forest.

I pass over the ceremonies of reception, and the hospitality that follows; both are in the main identical with those practised elsewhere in the non-Europeanised East, with the difference that here the women of the house take a more prominent part in welcome and entertainment than is customary in Syria, Arabia, or Western Asia generally. When not under Mahometan influences, Malays draw the line of demarcation between the sexes but slightly; and Christianity naturally tends to efface rather than to deepen the division. To this circumstance, more perhaps than to any other, I am inclined to attribute the manifest superiority in mind, and even in body, of the average Philippine Malay over his Mahometan kinsmen, as the latter are found in Sumatra, the Peninsula, the Sooloo Archipelago, and adjoining regions.

That the adoption of Islam may be, and in fact is, a real benefit and an uplifting to savage tribes, amongst whom the lowest and most brutalising forms of fetichism would else predominate, does not admit of doubt. Anthropophagy, human sacrifices, and other kindred horrors, have thus been banished by Mahometan teaching from whole tracts of Africa; and so far is well. But not less does experience show that, sooner or later, the tribe, the nation that casts in its lot with Islam, is stricken as by a blight; its freshness, its plasticity disappear first, then its vigour, then its reparative and reproductive power, and it petrifies or perishes. With the abstract and theoretical merits of Monotheism or Polytheism, Islam or Christianity, I have nothing to do; but this much is certain, that within the circle of the Philippine Archipelago itself—not to seek examples further away—the contrast between the Mahometan

villages of the southernmost islands and the Christian ones elsewhere, is very remarkable, nor by any means favourable to the former.

For a satisfactory explanation of the problem before us, there is no need for recurring to causes, if such there be, hid in the extra-mundane and unknown. The reason is near to seek. Family life, family ties, family affections, these form the only true, stable, and at the same time expansive basis for communities, states, empires even; and that these may, and actually do, coexist after a fashion with a vigorous profession of Mahometanism no one who has experimental knowledge of Turkish or Arab population can possibly deny. They exist; but even when at their best and strongest are always cramped, stunted, and hindered from their full growth and development by the forced demarcation between the sexes, the sanctioned polygamy, the over-facility of divorce, and the other social mistakes interwoven whether by the hand of the Prophet himself, or rather, as with Sprengel I incline to believe, by that of the narrow-minded and ascetic Omar, into the very texture of Islam. Nowhere are family bonds closer drawn, family affections more enduring than among the Malay races, and nowhere, in consequence, is whatever weakens or distorts them more injurious. Hence a Malay Mahometan is a contradiction, an anomaly, a failure, much as a Hindoo Christian or a European Buddhist might be. The system does not suit him, nor he the system. Not so the Malay of the Philippino-Christian type. His family, as that of his Chinese or Japanese cousins, moderate polytheists like himself, is a pleasing sight, much subordination and little constraint, unison in gradation, liberty not license. Orderly children, respected parents, women subject but not suppressed, men ruling but not despotic, reverence with kindness, obedience in affection, these form a loveable picture, nor by any means a rare one in the villages of the Eastern Isles.

Our mid-day meal, the components of which differ little from those of a West Indian or a Bombay up-country *menu*, with cookery to match, is over. Follows, for those who desire it, a

dreamy half-siesta of cigars and the green coolness of rustling bamboo-sprays outside the window, with glimpses of a shining river and light outrigger canoes gliding over it just seen betwixt the leaves; a purple volcano-peak and a faint blue mountain range beyond. And now the white perpendicular glare of noon is slanting into mellowness, and we stroll out of doors for a survey of the village, keeping whenever we can under the shade of the thick-planted garden trees, mango, palm, orange, lanzon, santol, medlar, fifty more, each with its own peculiar foliage and fruit, pleasant to the eye and good to eat, a survival of Eden. The villagers' houses, some large, some small, wood or bamboo, two-storied or one, mere huts or spacious dwellings, according to the fortunes of the inmates, are jotted here and there in an unsymmetrical row among the trees with utter disregard of proportionate dimensions; but all have a comfortable, a cosy look, suggestive of sufficiency; many of them, white painted with stripes green or blue, rarely red, and occasionally a flower pattern or fanciful scroll-work to enliven them more, show an attempt at decoration; others are content with the pale yellow of the split and interlaced bamboo that forms their walls; the roofing is grey palm-thatch. On this festival-day lamps are placed ready for lighting at every window, and over every doorway, flower-garlands hang between, and frequent arches of cane, festooned with white or red cloth, and hung with lanterns of more colours than Joseph's coat, span the road. We have left behind us the white church and "convents," the Capitan's many-windowed house, the guard-station, where a couple of brown young policemen, natives, of course, but attired in Spanish military uniform, languidly keep what courtesy may name watch, and now we have before us a large wattled building, surrounded by a wide enclosure, and with extensive galleries in front and on the sides; the central thatch roof towers dome-like above the rest. Several natives clad, for the day is yet hot, in the gauziest and most transparent of hemp blouses, or absolutely naked to the waist, are entering the crowded gateway, others are issuing from it, like bees about the mouth of a hive; all is animation, almost—so far as the

word is compatible with Malay composure—excitement. It is the village cock-pit, the great afternoon resort of Sundays and holidays as observed throughout this entire region of the world, from Penang to the confines of New Guinea; in the Philippines most of all.

Whether the Malays, as some writers assert, learnt cock-fighting from the Spaniards, or the Spaniards, as others opine, from the Malays, I will not attempt to decide, the historical problem is too complicated. But from whichever the origin of the sport, it is certain that the zeal for it that nowadays glows in every native breast from Luzon to Mindanao, let alone the rest of Malaysia, is such as might rejoice the soul of a Windham himself. Rich or poor, it would be hard to find a Malay householder, Ilocan, Tagal, Visaian, or whatever his tribe and island in the great Spain-governed Archipelago, who does not rear at least as many fighting-cocks as his means permit, and too often rather more; nor is it wholly a calumny which asserts that the owner is wont to tend his bird better and love it dearer than any other living object of his household belongings, wife and children not excepted. Stories are current of a respectable Malay paterfamilias escaping from amid the ruins of his burning home—no rare occurrence in these villages of wood and thatch, especially during the dry season—and bearing carefully shielded in his arms his favourite, scarce-rescued bird, while his wife and children are left behind to shift for themselves unheeded as best they may. Exaggerations, I am bound to say, but, I also fear, "founded on fact."

We enter the precincts—the admission fee is a mere trifle, and a cheap cigar, if no coin be at hand, is current payment for this and for many other minor costs, to see the sport. It has been often described; the chief thing worthy of remark is that a heel of either fighting bird is armed with a sharp razor-like steel blade, near two inches in length; a deadly weapon, that materially abridges the duration of the combat between the feathered rivals. Once at close quarters, the rest is an affair of seconds rather than of minutes; at least I never saw it otherwise. It is a somewhat brutal amusement after all, and so far

lowers the Malays to the level of our own ancestors some three or four generations ago. But the really worst picture of a Philippine cock-fight is the betting universal among the spectators of the game; the sums staked are often very high, and their payment, which is rarely shirked, not uncommonly involves the ruin of the loser. Thus the cock-pit too frequently proves the first step in an Avernian descent leading down to prison and crime. Here we have in truth before us the Malay "turf," though Malay civilisation has not yet widened enough to include within its circle "welchers" and their kin, nor, I think, ever will. Self-respect, a feeling hardly ever absent from the national character, would alone suffice to forbid it. The same self-respect displays itself too, even on occasions like the present, when, if ever, it might be supposed weak or wanting, in other ways. Look round the crowded circles, where several hundreds of half-naked spectators of every age are close packed together in the broiling afternoon heat, and acted on by all the combined influences of gambling, emulation, and the sport itself; not a word, not a sound is to be heard, not a gesture to be seen approaching to "rowdyism;" not a hint of disorder or disturbance. Passions, strong ones too, certainly, are at work; vice in many forms can hardly fail to be present and busy in gatherings of the kind; but no vulgarity, no visible or audible coarseness are there. This is partly due to the comparative absence of intoxication; for "tuba," the fermented palm-juice that does almost universal duty for beer or spirits among the Philippine "natives," is rarely drunk in excess, and even were it, could hardly prove more effective than, in Dr. Johnson's estimation, claret itself. But the chief order preserver is the stable equilibrium of the native mind, the decorum born of moderation. A Malay may be a profligate, a gambler, a thief, a robber, a murderer; he is never a "cad;" that type, as well as the "rough"—the death-bed abhorrence of the great Queen of England's Renaissance—is a development of the "higher," that is, of the more muscular, more energetic, more pushing, more complicated races; and the absence of that worst of Philistines from amid the equable diffusion of courtesy

and self-restraint that stamp the average Turanian, is alone no small compensation for the inferiority, if inferiority there be, of the gentler, calmer, less aggressive, also less progressive tribes. The adjuncts of an Epsom grand stand, or a Dutch "kermes," may make one occasionally regret the less civilised but better-mannered crowd of a Philippine "fiesta."

Quitting the equivocal attractions of the cock-pit, we engage a "caramata," one of the light covered jaunting-cars before described; the slim, scantily attired jarvey, sun-sheltered by his mushroom-like straw hat, and with somewhat of the professional humour of the Wellers of the earth on his boyish face, flogs into a canter the rough grass-fed ponies of the vehicle, and away we go, passing under a highly decorated bamboo gateway, built up right across the village entry, with side-doors for foot-farers, the whole extemporised for the day's festival with a prodigality of material and labour, seemingly out of all proportion with the means of the constructors. And now we are on the high road, where the ditches on either side, and the spreading trees planted at short intervals for welcome shade, are almost the only indications that it is a road at all in the European sense of the term. Uneven, irregular, now rock, now mere soil rising in unmanageable hummocks, or deep-scored into ruts and holes, a day's rain, as rain is in the tropics, would render it next to impassable. But we will suppose our excursion to be made in the dry or the half-dry season, that is at any date between October and July, best if in February or March before the summer heats, too intense for average European endurance, have set in. Be our way then through the lowlands, rice districts, sugar districts; or be it, if more varied scenery attract us, amid the plantations of coffee, cacao, or "abaca," of the hilly grounds. The rice-fields are well watered with careful distribution; Mr. Fergusson does not err in assigning the palm of irrigative skill to the Turanian races; the cane patches, though small in individual extent, wave dense and yellow; the coffee-bushes, unlike the cruelly mutilated stumps that do duty for them in Ceylon, spread far their straggling boughs berry-laden; the broad leaves of the shapely

"abaca" plantain glisten emerald in the sun. But to all one feature is common, or rather all are distinguished by the peculiar absence of one feature, rarely missed elsewhere in the colonial tropics, namely, large estates. Rice lands, cane lands, coffee lands, hemp lands alike, all are divided and subdivided; and however vast the green carpet of cultivation may be in its total extent, the irregular patches that make it up are not less infinite in number than capricious in shape. Equally remarkable is the absence of large agricultural establishments, buildings, factories, store-houses, and the like. Is that diminutive shed, with a few low heaps of crushed cane refuse about it a sugar-mill? Can that narrow thatch covering be a coffee depot? that rudely-constructed hand-worked contrivance just seen through the plantain stems a hemp-preparing machine? Yet such in truth it is, such they are; and though specimens of somewhat more dignified dimensions may occasionally be found, they are rare exceptions, and may be counted, the Archipelago through, on the fingers; while the grandest of them would sink into mere insignificance if transferred to Demerara or Martinique, Australia or Ceylon.

Large proprietors, in the accepted signification of the phrase, are rare in the Philippines, where "every rood of ground maintains its man;" and little room accordingly is left for the expansion of single estates. Little room, and, luckily, as we shall see, for the prosperity no less than for the happiness of the "natives," little agglomerated capital. Spanish capitalists here are none; and other European proprietors of land and field, from a variety of causes useless here to discuss, none worth mentioning also. Mestizos, that is half-breeds, generally of Chino-Malay origin, are the most bulky estate-owners; and the lands and fortunes they not rarely amass into one seldom hold together beyond a life-time, but some obey the Eastern law of subdivision between heirs, and fall asunder. The while far the greater part of the soil is in the hand of the Malays themselves, who, easily contented, and not much given to anxieties about fortune-making and the future, till each his little plot, and make their bargains for disposing of the produce with the

Chinese or semi-Chinese middlemen; by whom again it is transferred wholesale to European, chiefly British merchants, and so reaches the coast and the cargo ships.

Votaries, if such yet there be, of the "Manila cheroots," so sadly deteriorated of late years, may wonder here that no tobacco-growing district has been brought under our retrospective view. But these districts are almost wholly restricted to the northernmost region of the Archipelago, and are besides so exceptional in every respect that they ought to be treated of, if at all, apart from any others. Their landscape is, I regret to say, a gloomy one, and I willingly refrain from the contrast of its sombre tints with the bright and cheerful hues around us to-day; they are proper to nine-tenths at least of Philippine territory, and peculiar to it.

In most, if not all other intertropical colonies—the West Indies for example—the administration and enterprise alike are both of them essentially European, the labour alone native. In these "Eastern Isles," on the contrary, the Spaniards, content with administration, have left enterprise no less than labour to the natives themselves. The result is a very remarkable one; we have already to a certain extent seen it exemplified in detail, and shall see more; let us now pause a moment to gather it up in one comprehensive view.

Eight million natives, more or less, inhabit the Philippines; and of this vast aggregate the principal, almost the only sustenance, morning, noon, and eve is rice. And what famine is, how frequent, how disastrous, how overwhelming among a rice-subsisting population, the annals of Madras, Orissa, Ceylon, Bengal, have too often taught us. A calamity that, it would seem, no foresight can avert, to which no remedy can suffice. And yet, in the Philippine Archipelago, scarcity even is of rare occurrence, famine unknown; in the worst of years hardly a sack of grain has to be imported; in average seasons the land has enough for her children, all swarming as they are, and to spare. More still, after deducting the entire vast extent of soil and amount of labour devoted exclusively to this one staff of local life, enough remains of both to supply the export

trade with a yearly equivalent of four to six million sterling in sugar, coffee, hemp, tobacco, and all the other varied products of tropical agriculture. "Enough and over, enough for ourselves, and over and above for our neighbours," is the fact-spoken motto of the colony; and of how many other European colonies can this be said—of any?

Whence then this abiding sufficiency? What is the want-repelling charm? Is it a better climate? a richer soil? a more regular and abundant rainfall than other island-groups can boast? To some extent, perhaps; but such advantages, though they may contribute towards well-being, cannot of themselves effect it. Or is it greater skill, greater energy, greater aptitude for labour in the natives themselves? The Malay, like other children of the tropics, limits his labour by the measure of his requirements, and that measure is narrow indeed. Not so much what they have, but rather what they have not, makes the good fortune of the Philippines, the absence of European enterprise, the absence of European capital. A few European capitalist settlers, a few giant estates, a few central factories, a few colossal money-making combinations of organised labour and gainful produce, and all the equable balance of property and production, of ownership and labour, that now leaves to the poorest cottager enough, and yet to the total colony abundance to spare, would be disorganised, displaced, upset; to be succeeded by day-labour, pauperism, government relief, subscriptions, starvation. Europe, gainful insatiate Europe, would reap the harvest; but to the now happy, contented, satiate Philippine Archipelago, what would remain but the stubble, but leanness, want, unrest, misery? The garden was the garden of Eden; its indwellers must needs hearken to the serpent counsel, develop its resources, and be themselves cast forth from sufficient, unappreciated happiness, never to regain it, never return.

O balmy life-giving breezes of the wide Pacific, with enjoyment in every flutter of your wings! O golden glories of the evening sun-god, ere yet he withdraws from view within his cloud-built palace of amber and crimson, reared on the deep

inmensity of blue! long be yours to range and reign over the waving emerald of the parcelled rice-field, the unpruned freedom of the fruit-clustered bough, the bannered flaglets of the yellowing cane-patch, the green glister of the plantain-grove, the triumph of the stately garden-palm, while frequent amid them, each sheltering its contented owner-peasant and the children-inheritors of the land, rise the little thatched cottages, undwarfed by the vast constructions of overshadowing capital, unsmirched by Western smoke and enginery; while the fruit-bearing land smiles her bounty on her unorphaned children, and the children yet claim for their own the native bosom of their proper land. Birthright ill sold for any counter-exchange of elusive gain; Eden unequally bartered for the whole world of unrest and striving that seethes and struggles without the island bounds. Long may those bounds remain, long may they keep at bay the gods of the stranger, the price of the alien, the progress that is retrocession, the science that strips to nakedness, the energy that consumes and destroys, the greed of all-organising, all-devouring capital, the skilled force insatiate of its slaves, the iron and the gold. And thou, cherished vision of southern piety, Virgin-goddess of crowded shrines, Guadaloupe or Rosario, Lady of Refuge, Mother and Queen of men, revive in this encroaching, all-absorbing age thy ancient legends of danger repelled, invaders baffled, protected island-shrines; and shroud in thy own mystic veil from the profane gaze of enterprise, from the intruding crews of progress, that fatal gift of beauty, fatal to so many of her sisters, the beauty of the Eastern sea-nymph who clings to thy knees, nestles at thy feet, secure in thy shelter, happy beyond desire in herself and thee.

A few minutes of briefest twilight and already the warm star-spangled night has called forth the entire village, together with the flocking crowds who have come from the adjoining hamlets, in whatever they can muster of gayest ornament, silver or silk, to take their share in the "Fiesta" of the district. From the pillared church front and the massive octangular bell-tower close by, now illuminated by countless lamps from base to summit, the graceful bamboo-constructed arches, flung at short

intervals across the main roadway of the village, and round by a complete circuit to the church porch again, form a glowing avenue of coloured lanterns and transparent patterns and devices, beneath which the patronal procession is to pass. And here it comes, in two endless streams, men and boys in their fluttering blouses on one side of the road, women and girls in close-girded silks on the other, all bareheaded, and with lighted tapers in their hands, talking, laughing, and merry, but great or small alike orderly and decorous in word and gesture. The foremost are a good way already ahead; and now behold a painted tinsel-crowned image, the Baptist it may be, attired in half-military uniform, or S. Francis in his religious garb, or a Virgin-Martyr, diademed and bedizened, with real jewels of price, diamonds, rubies, emeralds, glittering amid the coloured ribbons and rags, borne along the midway between the files, high on a bedecked bamboo litter, amid a blaze of tapers that lights up as it passes the deep foliage on either side and overhead into a semblance of day. Then more processionists; and after a moderate interval a second demi-god, S. Michael it may be, or S. Peter perhaps, or any other worshipped ideal of the Christian Pantheon, comes swaying along, more gorgeous than its predecessor; and yet a third, and a fourth; and all the while, with occasional halts for gathering up stragglers, or clearing the way ahead, the procession moves on, a double serpent of brilliancy, and thickens as it moves; while from amid the illuminated houses, and dense gardens off the road, rockets shoot up their irregular greetings far into the starry silence overhead. But now the crowd is at its closest, and the black official jackets of the village dignitaries on one side, and the brightest silks of their long-tressed helpmates on the other, usher in a gigantic litter, slow borne on the shoulders of the stoutest, stateliest devotees; where, throned amid a blazing pyramid of tapers, herself a blaze of tinsel and diamonds,

> Our Lady comes smiling and smart
> With a pink gauze gown over spangles, and seven swords stuck in her heart;

or some other avatar likeness of Heaven's Queen; while all

around swells the devout murmur of venerative triumph; close follows the village band, reinforced from the nearer hamlets, as it blares out its liveliest march; and "*O Dea certe*," in its Malay equivalent, fills every heart, and bursts from every tongue. "Idolatry!" say you. And if so, what then? And what, I would fain know, in any worship, any rite man can offer to the Unknown Majesty, the Unknown Love but idolatry, whatever the symbol, whatever the expression? Image, picture, statue, book, wood, stone, word, written scroll, printed paper, idea, thought itself, what are they all in the great God-poised balance but symbols, but idols? Be content then, my friend, with your own favourite idol, the image of your choice; bow before it, set it up never so high on the throne of your own making, it is well; but sneer not at, seek not to pull down the idols of your brethren; perhaps they are no further from the Infinite Truth they purport to symbolise than your own, like them finite too. Respect, though you participate not; give honour, though you refuse worship.

The procession winds on; and all the while a desultory firing of rockets and bursting of crackers detains not a few of the faithful at its starting point, the village centre, the green before the church, till, after an hour and more of slow circuit, the crowd, tapers, images, band and all, have re-entered the temple; and a solemn benediction, bestowed with all the efficacy that bells, books, candles, music, vestments, and unquestioning belief can give, dismisses the worshippers to festivity and amusement; which, for the wealthier householders, means several hours of supper and dancing, song and cigars in their own dwellings, or those of their friends. Copious the supper, lavish the hospitality. What the night's entertainment will cost our worthy "Capitan," whose brilliantly illuminated "sala" is crowded with at least sixty hungry Malay guests, and thrice the number of uninvited spectators, come to admire the chandeliers, the decorations, the musicians, and the dancers, often to join company with the last, and to partake in the unlimited refreshments set forth on the sideboards, I shudder to think. Perhaps so does he; but at any rate, no outward sign of disquiet mars

his composure, as with an unvarying smile of gratified hospitality he goes through the endless courtesies of a reception-night.

But the chief attraction of this period of the evening, and one to which even supper and dancing, roast pig and polka must yield in Malay estimation, is to be found out of doors, on the village square, not far from the church and the Capitan's own house. It is a spacious booth, the framework of bamboo, gaily draped and festooned with cloth white and red, and surmounted by flags; within is a raised stage, side-scenes, and curtains, the whole brilliantly lighted up, and open in front to the admiring crowd that will stand here and gaze for hours; on either side, reaching to some distance, rows of improvised boxes and seats, tier above tier, theatre-fashion, and hung with bright colours, give the more "fashionable" spectators view on the central stage. But boxes, seats, standing-room, all are gratis to-night, when the village itself defrays the expenses of the common amusement. The drama is a Malay one, and the characters numerous; kings, queens, chieftains, damsels, grave counsellors, nobles, soldiers, and so forth, all in the gayest dresses of Malayan type. The plot is generally an adaptation of some Biblical story, that of David and Jonathan being the most often selected; sometimes it is taken from the Hagiology; occasionally from semi-historical records of wars and reigns. The dialogue is commonly in verse; the acting more energetic than Hamlet might have approved; the music, abundantly bestowed as accompaniment, tolerable. But whatever the theme, two characters, peculiar in their mode of adaptation to the Malay drama, are never wanting. One is a quaintly attired buffoon, who the whole play throughout, and in the midst of the most serious or pathetic scenes, suddenly cuts in from time to time, now addressing the actors and actresses—the latter are most often, as on the old English stage, lads in female dress—with some absurd counterfeit of their own speeches and gestures, now mimicking them in a sort of stage-aside for the benefit of the audience; and thus, in a rude fashion, supplying that side current of the comedy of human life, keeping pace with its tragedy, which the skill of Shakespeare never fails to present

personified in the Stephanos and Pompeys, the nurses and clowns of his noblest dramas. I should add that the Malay buffoon is very rarely coarse, never indecent, in his licence. The other character is the prompter, not studiously unseen and unheard by the audience, as with us, but patent to all on the mid-stage, and reciting in a loud voice every sentence of the play, to be repeated after him with appropriate action by the characters themselves. The length of the performance, never under three hours, sometimes extends over as many successive nights, nor seems to tire the spectators. Meanwhile, roadside sheds, offering to Malay palates a tempting display of sweetmeats and refreshments, booths for billiard-players, and other minor amusements or attractions, abound on all sides; drunkenness and disorder are conspicuous by their absence only.

Thus pass the hours till the approach of midnight is announced by a sudden glare of light and a noise like that of a well-sustained musketry discharge, summoning all who have not already by anticipation mustered on the spot, to the field outside the village, where the "Castel" crowns in fire the rejoicings of and glories of the festival.

It is, if not in general conception, yet certainly in detail, a genuine Philippine toy. A tower of two, three, or even four stages, is constructed of bamboos close interlaced and tied together, with turrets and battlements *ad libitum*, till the whole reaches twenty-five or thirty feet in height; above, below, and to every part of the framework, squibs, crackers, Catherine wheels, Roman candles, and rockets innumerable are made fast, ready for firing; and all about the "Castel" itself, but at some little distance, rise outworks, also twined of bamboo, and densely covered with fireworks of every description. For weeks beforehand preparations have been going on, and the yet unkindled edifice, festooned with white or coloured cloth, and bravely bedecked with streamer and flag, has been the favourite resort of afternoon crowds, a constant centre of joyful anticipation. Now its hour is come; midnight draws on, and the waning moon yet hangs low in the dark Eastern sky; when suddenly a preliminary up-burst of some scores of rockets, grouped clusterwise,

and filling the night air as they explode with floating showers of soft-falling stars, green, red, white, purple, blue, ushers in the grand act of the "Castel." From every side, every angle of barricade and tower, the fire rushes simultaneously forth, crackling, hissing, exploding, a fairy pandemonium, lighting up the tall trees and bamboo clusters in the fields around far and wide, and every face in the thick-gathered crowd beneath; for not a man, woman, or child of all who have attended the "fiesta" would for any human consideration miss the spectacle, the very bourne and utmost goal of their inventive delight; and at each fresh explosion the rapturous applause rises higher till it reaches the utmost pitch of excitement consistent with the habitual impassive calm of the Malay character. Sometimes this excitement is intensified by the added sport of a fiery bull, that is, a wicker framework more or less representing the animal, and well protected by thick hides, outside of which squibs and crackers are fastened in plenty, while a couple of men concealed within the hollow, and protected from the blaze without by the hide covering, make the burning, crackling monster rush hither and thither among the spectators, who scurry away on all sides in real or simulated alarm, amid shrieks and laughter. Thus midnight passes, and the merry tumult is at its loudest and maddest, when, all too soon, the "Castel" fires wane and dwindle, the explosions cease, the last rockets shed their sinking stars, and a few minutes latter all is darkness and silence over the trampled field; noiselessly, rapidly the crowd has melted away and dispersed, each to his resting-place to sleep out the brief space left till dawn, and the moon, left sole queen of the night, casts her white veil in a semblance of thin snow over grove and garden, church and home-roof, where a few expiring lamps yet twinkle amid a stillness like the stillness of the dead. We return to the room prepared for us by our host of the day before; and the bright morning sun wakes us to find the husbandmen already gone to early mass, or out with their buffaloes in the fields, the women moving to and fro with their water jars, or washing clothes in the neighbouring stream; streets and roads are all alive with slight-clad wayfarers and

creaking carts; and the daily current of village life is flowing calmly in its wonted channels; as, escorted to the outer gate by the "Capitan" and his attendants, we take our leave, and fare forth on our journey by sun and shade, mountain and river, hamlet and field, back to Manila.

To Manila? I lean over the low bulwarks of the *Leite*, as the little craft cleaves her south-western way towards the Straits of Singapore, and now see nothing around but the green heavings of the tepid China Sea; the last dim outline of high Mindoro and wild Palawan, westernmost island of the Spain-ruled Archipelago, has faded into sky; and the swarthy, active, boyish-seeming crew of sailors and firemen is all that remains in presence yet for four voyage-days more of the Philippines and their inhabitants. The fifth day will see us at Singapore; and these too will be things of the past. But of all tropical lands, all tropical races that it has been my lot to visit, none will have left a pleasanter, a more heart-satisfying memory than the Philippine Archipelago, the home of the half-civilised Malay. Is wholly-civilised Europe, is England herself, a better home to her children, a happier? Compare and judge.

PHRA-BAT.

"That the significance of this world is a merely physical, nowise a moral one, is the greatest, the most injurious, the deepest of errors, the most absolute perversion of thought; and is itself the essence of that which Christian Belief has personified as Antichrist."

Thus far Schopenhauer, and rightly. Yet this very error is the basis of whatever the entire school of modern physicists,—I hate controversy, and accordingly abstain from names,—have in part assumed, in part striven to demonstrate in their handling of history, society, and man; the assumption, namely, that mankind is in its origin and development the outcome of physical luck, chance, accident; the reasoned deduction of whatever goes under the names of morality, conscience, belief, veneration, duty, from physical need, physical desire, physical influence, physical hope or fear.

Such teaching is indeed only possible by those and to those who have passed their days in practical ignorance of men and nations; the book-philosopher in his study, the salaried professor at his desk, the theorist in his self-made isolation. He who has lived a man among men, has taken part in the actualities of social and national existence, has studied the unfolded tapestry of many colours and designs out of which history, present or past, is woven, will come to a very different conclusion, and will soon know that not the kingdom of God only but of Man is within him; that the root, the life of every people, as of every individual that composes it, is not in having but in being, not in acquirement but in belief, not in culture but in will. Hence the value of the studies of which the present Essay is a sample; they strike the keynote on which the entire symphony is based. In this instance the keynote is Buddhism; and Buddhism with less admixture of extraneous elements than is common among the many nationalities that have adopted the teachings of Gotama; here the ultimate meaning, the heart, the soul of Siamese nationality. Three years, from 1880 to 1883, of residence in the land, to give it its correct name, of Thaï, enabled me to learn more, here barely hinted at, of a system, much overlaid and distorted in Chinese and Japanese, perhaps also (but here personal knowledge fails me) in Thibetan or Tartar acceptance, but in itself, rightly understood, the most beneficent, the most humanising, and, at all events, not the most irrational of those promulgated among mankind.

SOUL, spirit, vital principle, or by whatever other name it may be called (the formula matters little), there is in whatever lives

a something, real though unexplained, which determines its life, growth and duration; a something, itself a part, yet having action on the whole, and without which the rest is nothing but decay more or less speedy, and dissolution. Nations too, like other organisations, have each its own vital principle, in virtue of which they grow and live, and on which they proportion and shape themselves; while its loss implies the similar loss at no distant period of the national type and vigour, followed by the resolution of the whole into an incoherent mass of selfish individualities, and ultimate obliteration. This is nothing else than the idea, the system, the master-thought, connatural or adopted, with which the nation has identified itself, and in which it has found the principle of its life and growth, the secret of its strength, the augury of its future. This too it is that men love to embody in some national watchword, some name, usage, or symbol, and often enshrine in some special site, some peculiar sanctuary chosen out and consecrated to its honour. Very generally, though not always, the spot thus selected is linked one way or other with the individual memory of some hero or demi-god, some protective power, identified with personal act or life. Rome indeed, cosmic in the forecast as in the realisation of her greatness, limited the mystery of her tutelary Capitol by no recognised name, or veiled it by the vague but high-sounding titles of the Father of gods and men; but the Acropolis of Athens, the city of self-government and intellect, was consecrated to Minerva; the Ka'abeh of the Arabs, when the Arabs first knew themselves a nation, to the memory of Abraham; Incarnate wisdom lent its name to the Byzantine Palladium in the capital where the son of God first received, and may yet again receive, imperial worship; France, while yet the France that claimed to herself the vanguard of Christian Europe, revered the sainted royalty of St. Denis; Spanish gloom imagined a patron and type in the ascetic St. James and the cave of Compostella; Bulgarian hardihood still affects the mountain hermitage of Rilo; sociable Russia bows before the hundred shrines of holy Moscow. The list might easily be drawn out to ten times the length; for the name is not more intimately

connected with the individual, nor the device with the flag, than are the sanctuary and the patron, most often both, but at all events one or other of them, with the nationality. For they are the abridgment of its meaning, the symbol and token of its life; and the nation that has not these, however abundant in mechanical inventions, and the grosser forms of ungraceful wealth, is a mere association of ignoble aims and deeds, a banded rabble of vulgar enterprise and selfish adventurers, nothing more.

It is not indeed generally till the growing nation has definitely emerged from that early and half-formed condition in which, like the human infant, it "has never thought that 'this is I,'" has arrived at self-consciousness, and the knowledge of its own strength and purport, that the selection of patron or sanctuary is made; and hence we find their appearance coincident most often with the opening cycle of the national greatness itself. Some successful leader, some orator-saint, some chieftainship of hand or mind, some victory won, some glorious vision presenting to beholders the idea of the time—one or more of these combined gives the occasion of the national choice, and in so doing indicates the centre round which whatever is great and noble in the race rapidly gathers itself, till it becomes the very heart and core of the living nation. So it was, and so we read in the annals of the old Jewish kingdom, of the Arabian empire, of the Byzantine dominion; so it was with Athens, so with Bulgaria, so, in a word, with all the instances already cited, or that might have been as readily cited, Rome the Eternal alone excepted; her Capitol was equiæval with her birth. But in this, as in almost everything else, she has no like or second. And thus it was that when the tribe called Thai, in its southward movement from Yunnan down the great Meinam valley, after long years of uncertain rule, wars that were mere forays, and all the capricious fluctuations of a clannish and semi-barbarous existence, had consolidated and shaped itself into the ruling race and hereditary dynasty of Siam, then, nor till then, was the revelation made that consecrated Phra-Bat as the symbol and embodiment of the national ideal, of Buddha and the world-famous system that bears his name.

The half-dozen Siamese scholars, if so many there be, among my English readers, will at once recognise in the compound word Phra-Bat the nature and character of the symbol it denotes. "Phra," or "lord," is a title of honour wide in its application as our own "lord," but chiefly applied by custom to holy things or persons, as monks, priests, and the like. Neither in itself, nor in composition, does it ordinarily indicate anything, in the full sense of the word, divine; when prefixed to the name of Buddha or religious objects, it might be suitably rendered by "venerable" or—only the precise idea we Christians connect with the word is scarcely Siamese—"holy." "Bat" is "foot," or "footstep," but in this particular case means "footprint." If accordingly we divest the phrase, as we ought, from all notion of implied divinity, "The footprint of the Lord" will be its plain and correct rendering. In popular use the name of "Phra-Bat" is now extended to the mountain, nay, to the entire range, on which the footprint in question is found.

The footprint symbol is, from whatever cause, a favourite one in Buddhist lands, though by no means peculiar to them or to the religion they have housed, since Christianity and Mohammedanism alike claim veneration for the footmarks of their respective founders at Jerusalem, Damascus, and Rome; while like memorials of less celebrated and less authentic personages are pointed out by local tradition in many other regions. Various, too, and fanciful are the explanations of the token assigned by writers of different schools; some seeking to derive the symbol and the honour paid to it from I know not what utilitarian consideration ascribed to that rather apocryphal personage, præ-historic man; others calling in to aid the yet more apocryphal craft of imaginary priests and kings, and the ready credulity of nations submitting to deliberate imposture for the benefit of a ruling caste. But all special hypothesis apart, the idea that the great and powerful benefactor, hero, or saint, or demi-god, might, when quitting some spot of predilection, some favoured haunt, or perhaps the world altogether, have left behind him in this manner a token of the sensible presence he was even then about to withdraw from men, is a very natural

one, nor least so when, as happens to nations in the heyday of their prime, imagination and poetry are at their liveliest and best. At such a time, the boyhood or youth of a people, fancy, no longer childish and incoherent in her imagery, sketches out with a firmer hand than heretofore the outlines of her best efforts, and plants the pedestal on which may be reared a statue to endure for ages. Like their near cousins of Japan, the Siamese, though wanting in the high poetical strain which distinguishes—my readers will allow me the use of a convenient if not over accurate nomenclature—the Aryan and Semitic races, are yet more fancy-gifted than the majority of the great Mongolian family to which they belong; more so indeed than their cousins, the cleverer but more prosaic Chinese, or perhaps than any other inhabitants of Central and Eastern Asia. Nor need we grudge them the moderate amount of imaginative faculty requisite for the shaping out the footprint of their patron saint; though we may not unreasonably envy them the steadfastness of purpose that has so long kept them, and still keeps them, faithful to its honour.

History, if Fergusson's assertion be correct, has never risen with any Turanian people above the level of annals, and those in general of the most meagre and unsatisfactory character. To this rule Siamese records make no exception. Where, however, the marvellous is concerned, the narrative is apt to become suddenly copious in an unwonted degree; though possibly without a proportionate increase of accuracy in detail. Omitting accordingly much that is childish and irrelevant, the tale of the discovery of Phra-Bat runs as follows. It was in the year A.D. 1606, during the reign of Phra-Chao-Song-Tam, one of the earlier kings of that powerful dynasty which extended Siamese dominion over the Malay peninsula to the south, and the Laos provinces to the north, and laid Cambodia prostrate never more to rise, that a simple huntsman, by name Phran-Bun, while following the chase among the dense woodlands a few leagues south-east of the then Siamese capital, Loph-buri, discovered on a lonely rock—fit station for a meditative anchoret—a mark of unusual form, the impress it seemed of a human, though gigantic

foot. Now the forest region where this discovery was made belonged to the province of which Sala-buri, a town on the eastern branch of the Meinam, was capital; and thither the fortunate huntsman repaired to report the wonder. The governor of Sali-buri immediately referred the matter, as one of high import, to the king. Now the monarch had passed many years of his early life in a monastery, where he had attained great proficiency in sacred lore, and was consequently well aware not only what the print of Buddha's foot should resemble, but also that such a footprint certainly existed, though hitherto unrevealed, in Siam. Eager to verify his expectations, he set out at once to visit the forest and revelation, with the huntsman for guide, and a whole company of learned monks, skilled in traditional symbolism, and thoroughly qualified to pronounce authoritatively on the genuineness of the prodigy, in his train.

To such a quest there could be only one result. King, priests, huntsman, and all besides, recognised in the rock-print before them the correct likeness of the hundred and eight well-known symbols supernaturally engraven on the sole of the master's foot, and revered the sacred "Chakr" or wheel, great Buddha's own mark and proper token. A temporary shrine was at once erected on the spot, and four years later a gorgeous pavilion or "Maha-Dop," with all the adjuncts of Siamese worship had been completed and consecrated, with seven days of high festivity to the yearly recurring pilgrimage.

Succeeding kings amplified and adorned the shrine, till the treasures it contained attracted in 1766 a band of robbers, who, availing themselves of the general confusion prevailing throughout the land after the successful Burmese invasion of the epoch, and the downfall of Ayuthia and of the Siamese monarchy together, stormed the place, slew the priests, stripped the sacred footprint of the gold with which it had been thickly plated, and burnt the plundered temple.

A temporary shed was a few years later erected over the desecrated relic by order of the brave but unfortunate Chao-Tak-Sin, the expeller of the Burmese from Siam. His own untimely death prevented however the complete restoration of the shrine

during his reign; but his successor, Phra-Putta-Yot-Fa, the founder of the present dynasty, took up the work in 1787, and constructed the "Maha-Dop" that now covers the footprint; while following kings, down to the ruler of Siam, have each in turn visited, and by their pious liberality contributed to the adornment of the place.

The period for the yearly pilgrimage of Siamese votaries to the national shrine is on or about the full moon of the third month, a lunation corresponding more or less to our own February; just as the cool, dry weather of December and January is beginning to yield to the approach of the hot season, which here attains its height in April. Fortunately for travellers in a country where anything that could by the utmost stretch of courtesy be termed a road is a rare luxury, the sacred spot can be approached from the direction of the capital by water within fourteen or fifteen miles—thanks to one of the many river-branches of the great Meinam system, that intersect in all directions the low-lying delta of Siam. The plain, evidently sea-bed at no very remote geological epoch, slopes down in a gentle, uniform, and almost imperceptible decline from the foot of the inland mountain chains on the north, to the mangrove swamps of the mosquito-haunted coast that advances southward year by year on the retiring sea. The general level is monotonous as that of the Nile delta itself; but here and there dark limestone rocks, belonging—I speak under correction—to the Permian formation, start abrupt and precipitous from the plain; islands of an earlier date, and except in being surrounded by earth instead of water, resembling in every respect those which yet stud the shallow surface of the upper Gulf of Siam. Sometimes these rocks cluster in groups of several miles in extent; their summits are weather-worn into fantastic peaks and pinnacles; their sides formed by buttresses of detached blocks piled up against the precipices whence they have fallen, or hollowed out by deep crevasses and winding caverns often penetrating far into the central mass. Trees and shrubs of every tropical species, among which the bright green foliage of the sacred "Bo" tree, the "Pipul" of India, is con-

spicuous, find root, thanks to plentiful heat and moisture, in the clefts of the rock; the topmost pinnacles generally stand out bare and black under the blazing sun. All around is dense jungle, dwarf bamboo, thorny shrubs, and here and there a lofty tree of præ-Raphaelitic slenderness and grace, not ill-suited to the hill outlines which much resemble those we see in the backgrounds of the works of early Italian painters. Amongst this wilderness at wide spaces of interval a patch of land has been occasionally cleared for rice-fields or garden ground, fringed by the russet-coloured thatch-roofs of peasant huts.

The Phra-Bat group of hills, one of those just described, rises at a distance of twenty miles or thereabouts from the mountain ranges of Loph-buri, the northern limit of the Meinam delta, and as far or a little more from the range of Korat, here the easterly limit of the plain. The highest peaks do not, I think, exceed twelve hundred feet, though their capricious abruptness gives them a delusive appearance of a much greater attitude. Just where the westernmost spur of the rocky ridge starts from the level, the forest has been cleared away to some distance; and the pilgrim of Phra-Bat, who up to the moment of his actual arrival at the mountain foot has scarcely been able to obtain through the dense foliage around his pathway so much as a glimpse of the wished-for goal, now suddenly finds himself in presence of the shrine.

The nearest object, however, that presents itself to the visitor on arrival is, not the shrine itself, but a large straggling palace, brick-built and plastered, but with no pretensions whatever to beauty of construction, surrounded by a wide extent of very dilapidated garden wall; the whole the work of the late king, an excellent monarch, but whom the gods had certainly not made architectural, as too many ugly edifices remain to testify. Here the king himself, and, by his permission, the great of the land find lodging when visiting the sacred spot; at other times the structure remains empty, uncared for, and even in part ruinous; it being too much the Siamese custom, like the Turkish, to build much, but little or never to repair. Two other big brick and plaster houses, in even worse condition than the

palace, stand or fall further on; they have been erected as resting-places for the principal Siamese state officials when on a visit to Phra-Bat. Nearer the rock itself, but still on the plain, several long wooden dwellings, raised to some height above the ground on piers, give shelter to priests, whether resident or pilgrim; the muster-roll of the former, as I was told, shows about two hundred in all; but there are rarely more than thirty of them here present at a time; the name of the latter during the pilgrim season is legion. Close by are the two buildings of the kind called in Siamese "Bawt," a word that may be indifferently rendered by "temple" or "church;" their form outside is something between that of an ordinary chapel and a barn, with a high-pitched tiled roof, or rather roofs, two or even three stages being often reared one above another; while at each end a gable, thickly charged with carved or plaster ornaments, and richly gilt and coloured, surmounts the two doors which, in all genuine Siamese places of worship, constitute the entrance. Within, a large, sometimes gigantic, statue of Buddha, seated on a lotus throne, and commonly surrounded by a whole crowd of smaller Buddhas, the offerings of individual piety, constitutes the most notable object; the walls are sometimes painted with scenes, not rarely grotesque enough, from the very mythological story of the holy man's career; occasionally the torments of the infernal region, depicted in a minuteness of physical detail that Dante might have envied, terrify or amuse sinners; not seldom the interior is merely whitewashed or bare. A raised platform for the preacher, who delivers his sermons sitting, is generally placed on one side, a little in front of the altar. This class of building comprises what Europeans commonly but inaccurately term "Wats;" the Siamese word "Wat" denoting in fact the entire sacred enclosure, often very extensive, and containing many other objects besides the temple itself. In connection with the two "Bawts" just mentioned are several "Senlas," or lecture-rooms, large open sheds, each containing a highly ornamented throne for the preacher; "Vihans," or resting-places for pilgrim priests; "Salas," or lodging-houses, totally unfurnished, of course, for

laymen; and two or three "Phra-chedis," constructions of which more hereafter. The rest of the cleared space is, at this epoch of the year, close crowded by an extemporised market, made up of long rows of bamboo-sheds, hastily run up at need with a few mats for shade. Here eatables of all kinds, Siamese kinds, mostly of a sweetly insipid taste, may be had at small price; alongside of sundry other articles of travelling requirements, such as pots, pans, cloths, rope, and the like; doves too, which the Siamese much affect as house-pets, and fighting-cocks; the last scarce less prized here for popular amusement than in the Philippines, though steel spurs are not in use as in the "Eastern Isles," and the achievements of the feathered combatants are in consequence comparatively bloodless. Everywhere groups of pilgrims, whole families, often babies included, sit camped under the trees or close nestling against the shadowy side of some rest-house; the priests, numerous and easily distinguished by their yellow dress amid the crowd, are not seldom provided with large white or yellow-fringed umbrellas; these they set up tent-wise in the ground, several of them side by side, till the effect produced at a little distance is that of a gigantic crop of mushrooms sprung up somehow among the bushes. At the time of our visit it wants yet ten days to the full moon appointed for the festival; but the entire neighbourhood, plain and hillside, is already crowded with pilgrims, men of every rank from the governor of a province with his numerous retinue of attendants down to the poorest day-labourer, with his wife and half-a-dozen naked children; a lively, but not disorderly scene, thanks to the total, or almost total, absence of drunkenness and its consequent vices, which, though only too largely naturalised by foreign importation at Bangkok, have as yet spread little beyond the capital and the immediate sea-coast.

From the ground level a flight of granite steps imbedded in the limestone rock leads up, after some windings, to a small ledge or plateau in the hill side, where, under the shade of the lofty "Bo" trees that spread their green canopy far aloft, Buddha, had he ever visited Siam—which it is absolutely certain he never did—might well have sat or stood in meditation.

Here, at all events, is the sacred footprint. The building that now shelters it, called the "Maha-Dop," or "great," *i.e.* "august dome," is of comparatively recent date; having been, as we have already seen, constructed by order of the King Phra-Putta-Yot-Fa, founder of the present dynasty, in the year 1787, only ninety-four years since. The older building, of the same date as the discovery of the footprint itself, was utterly destroyed, so runs the chronicle, by the band of Chinese freebooters, four hundred in number, of whom mention was made above in the summary of the fortunes of Phra-Bat. The edifice now before us is square, about thirty feet in dimension each way, without comprising the outer colonnade; but the pointed roof and spire above give it a total height of near a hundred feet. Round the walls outside, and supporting the wide-projecting roof, runs a portico of square-shafted pillars, fluted, and with lotus capitals; and outside these again and the basement on which they stand, is an open space, fifteen or sixteen feet wide, flagged with coloured marble, and bordered by a highly-polished granite balustrade that overhangs the native rock. This balustrade is curiously carved in fantastic open work, where the Chinese dragon finds frequent place; for stone and workmanship are alike from China, as are also the glistening marbles of the pavement and of the steps that lead up to the level of the colonnade and to the temple gates. These are four in number, two on the north side and two on the south, tall narrow entrances with an inward slope from threshold to lintel; and are provided with heavy folding-doors of solid teak, lacquered black, and inlaid with exquisite flower designs in mother-of-pearl. The columns of the outer portico are richly gilt, and their shallow flutings deepened by lines of red and blue; the outer wall of the temple is entirely covered by a gilt diaper of innumerable contemplative little Buddhas, each attended by an angel—or what is meant for one, half-bird, half-woman—in a respectful attitude, on a ground of bright red. Round the windows which admit the light from the east and west, oblong apertures with the same Egyptian-like slope as the doors, run raised border mouldings of flowers, all gilt, as are also the deep ogive niches that surmount them,

though patches of dark blue are skilfully inserted here and there to increase the effect, for the sense of colour and its application is not less developed among the Siamese than among the Chinese themselves. The roof, pyramidical in its general outline, is encircled tier above tier with seven crown-like bands of gilded pinnacles, glittering like little flames against the duller hues, red, yellow, green, and blue of the upward slope, which after rising thus for about thirty feet from the caves, tapers into a graceful spire, at first four-sided, but with deep retreating angles, that give it an almost octangular effect, the whole being painted in bright vertical stripes of colour, thrice bound together like a bundle of reed-stalks by horizontal bands of gold and purple. Higher up yet the spire moulds itself into a succession of nine lessening rings, one above the other; then changes into a slender gilded shaft, surmounted by seven lotus-flowers, and above these again seven golden coronets of open work, till the highest and smallest is surmounted by a gilded spike or lance-head, at a hundred feet or thereabouts from the ground. An exquisite structure, and of a type, I believe, peculiar to Siam; while the body of the main building itself, with its high narrow portals, and pier-like columns surmounted by lotus-shaped capitals, bears a somewhat Egyptian character, though less marked here than in many of the colossal buildings and giant statues so frequent throughout Siam.

Whether a resemblance amounting almost to a community of art betokens also a community of ethnical origin, or whether it be merely a result of similar local conditions, and an example, nor at all a solitary one, of the efficacy of such conditions in moulding men to mutual likeness, is a matter for research, and hard to decide. But thus much is certain, that the similarity between Egypt and Siam is by no means a merely superficial one, nor confined to the uses of form and colour in either land; and that the two great river tracts of the Nile and the Meinam resemble each other in the type and character of their inhabitants, their customs, their institutions, their arts, their dispositions, their religions even, more than the mere analogies of land. water, and climate would seem sufficiently to account for. It

would be easy, were this the occasion for it, to indicate the parallelism in every one of these, and to show how Siam is in many and important respects a very Egypt, only with the base of its delta turned to the south instead of the north, and the entire country brought some fifteen degrees nearer the Equator—an Egypt however as yet, for its better luck, without a foreign loan, as also without the results, good or bad, of serious foreign interference. A people, too, less laborious and less intelligent than the hard-worked servants of the Egyptian taskmaster, Pharaoh, Khedive, or Oppenheim; but on the other hand with the advantage—an inestimable one in the East—of never having been cramped and stunted by the worse than Procrustean mould of the Islamitic system, so surely fatal to the growth and development of a people, whatever its native energy. Happier in these regards, Siam is, after its fashion, a kind of præ-Mohammedan, nay, indeed, præ-Ptolemaic Egypt; an indirect survival of the ages when Denderah and Philæ were yet unbuilt, and liker to the ruled and the rulers of Thebes or Memphis than to those of Hellenised Alexandria or Islamitic Cairo. But in nothing is the similarity more evident—and let this be enough for our present purpose—than in the architecture of the two kingdoms. The same massive tree-like columns, close placed to supply the deficiency of arch or vault, the same lotus-petaled capitals, the same slope of the high portals, and not unfrequently of the windows, the same frequency of the obelisk-monument, distinct from, yet adjoining, the temple or the palace, the same just use and appreciation of size as an essential constituent of constructive excellence—such is the type dominant and repeated everywhere, at Bangkok, at Ayuthia, at Loph-buri, at Nakon-sawan, all throughout the land. Pity that the inferiority of building materials, and the almost universal employment of brick, and that too often ill baked and crumbly, should have rendered the greater part of the monuments of Siam at once less shapely and less enduring than those of Egypt.

Nor is it in architecture only, but in imagery, sculptured or painted, that the same resemblance may be observed. The free use of colour as an auxiliary or supplement of constructional

detail, to deepen shadow or to bring out relief, was, by the not doubtful evidence of what ages have spared, practised in the audience halls of Thebes and the temples of Luxor, exactly as it now is in the "Maha Prasat" of Bangkok, and the sanctuaries of "Wat Po"; while the outlines and attitudes of the portraitures that adorn, or are intended to adorn, the walls of the Siamese shrines might, where free from the too prevalent taint of Hindoo mythological extravagance, be readily imagined the work of Egyptian artists. But most of all the huge statues of Buddha, seated or reclining, the former often measuring sixty or seventy feet in height, the latter, extended over a hundred and twenty or thirty feet in length, yet comely and well-proportioned, though made of brickwork only, fashioned over with plaster, claim near kindred with Memnon and Rameses, and even reproduce in posture and expression the same fulness of repose and calm dignity, not without a hint of quiet scorn, that stamps the caste of their giant brethren adown the Nile valley. Indeed in Siam these features of sculpture and architecture are all the more marked by the abrupt contrast offered in the grotesque figures and fantastic ornamentations of Chinese workmanship mixed up capriciously among these very temples and statues, and representing a wholly different phase of Turanian art and mind; one which, more than any other influence from without, has penetrated, though not assimilated Siam.

But it is time that we return to Phra-Bat, and having surveyed the outside, let us now enter the building. The floor from wall to wall is covered by a mat of silver, plaited in thin slips, the offering of the piety of the late king; a monarch said to have entertained strange theories in matter of dogma, but who, happily for himself and his people, abstained from entering on the dangerous path of religious reform, and steadily upheld in practice the traditional forms and usages of Siamese Buddhism. The walls of the shrine are painted inside of a light red, with a gilded pattern resembling that on the outside, and are further decorated by some highly-varnished Chinese pictures, devotional gifts, but of no particular significance that I could

discover. The ceiling, which rises into a lofty cone, is a complicated stagework of carving and gilding; but its details are lost in the insufficient light afforded by the side windows of the shrine. Towards the south wall of the building a low dais, gilded and lotus-bordered, supports a sitting figure of the anchoret-king; small pastilles of sandal-wood, candles of a very ordinary description, and dim lamps of cocoa-nut oil burn ceaselessly before it, amid heaps of fresh flowers renewed hourly, and a heterogeneous collection of offerings denoting more devotion than good taste.

But these are mere accessories. Under the centre of the cupola is the sacred object of pilgrimage and shrine alike, the supposed impress of the holy foot. I trust that my Siamese readers, should I have any, will not quarrel with me for the epithet "supposed," when I subjoin that the cavity which does duty for footprint is nearly five feet in length by two in breadth, and it bears no resemblance whatever to the mark of a human foot, not even in the proportions of its shape, unless it be that the end which does duty for heel is rather narrower than the other, and that some well-intentioned but unskilful chisel has indicated at the larger end some scratches typical, it seems, of toe-marks, all equal in length, as indeed tradition affirms were in life the toes of the holy man, but the one on the left rather broader than the rest—the great toe, no doubt. According to these indications the impress is that of the right foot, and was made by a person who stood facing the north. Of the hundred and eight distinctive marks to which the footprint, as we are told, owed its first recognition, and even of the central and most significant "Chakr," or wheel, not a trace remains; they disappeared, it is said, when the shrine was plundered and burnt in 1766; an unsatisfactory explanation. The depth of the hollow in the rock surface is about ten inches; but all round it a raised border, brickwork I think, but very thickly gilt, and decorated with the likeness of a lotus-flower garland, protects the miraculous impress, which is further guarded by an iron grating, though this last during the pilgrimage season is removed.

Arrived at the goal of his journey, the Siamese pilgrim, layman or priest, sits down on the silver-matted floor beside the sacred symbol, and after raising his joined hands and bowing his head thrice or more often in pious veneration, remains a while in his place, reciting in a low voice some devout Pali formula, and meditating on the excellences of him who, for a third part—so statisticians affirm—of the human race represents the highest perfection to which man can attain; the great monarch who having weighed rank, birth, power, riches, pleasure, all that men desire, in the balance of reason, found all light as vanity, and abandoned all to find in abnegation that which satiety could not give, and to open by renouncement the unerring path from changeful death to changeless life—changeless and eternal; for such indeed is, when rightly understood, the true significance of Buddha's "Nirvana," however obscured by the over-subtlety of Asiatic metaphysics or misapprehended by the grosser minds of European scholars, French, English, or German, some prejudiced, but all unable to distinguish through the dense atmosphere of Western materialism and selfish individuality the clear colourless ray of truth, visible only to the unclouded eye of a pure heart. Yet the teaching was not in substance new, nor taught by Buddha only, nor learnt in his school alone; nor have there ever wanted since man was man witnesses to the one supreme truth, the solution of the enigma, the answer to the sphinx of existence, that in the annihilation of the individual self is the perfection of being, the consummation of love, life absolute and eternal. Known to the great Teacher of Galilee, known, so their memorials assure us, to the disciples of the word of His power, Semite or Gentile, to the ascetics of Egypt, to the anchorets of Calabria, to the mystics of Damascus and Cufa, to the love-bard of Cairo; known too to Gerson, to Lallement, to Surin and their following, but known as the one pearl of great price for which the all that is bartered is as nothing; the absolute, changeless, boundless, living love, in exchange for the narrowness, the limitations, the mutabilities of self and death. This goal Buddha saw, to this he pointed, towards this he endeavoured, nor wholly without success, to trace out

the path by which those who walk, though at the outset with yet unpurged eyesight, might arrive in time, first to the vision, then at last the attainment of the true life. That every act, good or evil, has its reward proportioned accordingly without fail or flaw, that the evil done in time must be compensated and cancelled in time; that the good must ultimately clear off and thrust out the evil, till through long continued succession of change, in which each phase is determined by and evolved from the preceding, evil and self-love; then lastly the self-consciousness which is the root and element of all evil, be gradually abolished and effaced, till existence reach the perfect, the absolute good, where self and individuality are no more. Such were the main lines of his track; and along these he placed the lesser and imperfect, but needful waymarks of special precept and observance by which the many might guide themselves in the right direction, though yet far from, nor even conscious of, the ultimate term. Few indeed—and how could it be otherwise?—are they among the millions who profess the observance of the Five Precepts, who hold in view, or even consciously tend towards the Nirvana of Buddha. But fewer still, those at least among the average Siamese, who do not cling with tolerable persistence to the prescribed rites and observances of the Buddhist code, or lose from sight the theory, and even in the main, the practice of the pathway of merit, or forget the certainty of its consequence and effect beyond the phase called death, through long succeeding ages of happiness or grief, according to the works done and the merits or demerits acquired day by day. And hence to define the Buddhist system as mere pessimistic positivism, or atheistic materialism, and Buddha himself as a teacher of hopeless annihilation, is sheer misrepresentation and calumny; nor indeed is it historically possible that by such preachments he or any one else could ever have earned the gratitude and secured the devoted adherence of countless multitudes and long succeeding generations.

Not death, but life, "more life and fuller," that is what men, Asiatics no less than Europeans, want! With this deep

longing, this inextinguished desire, divergences of race, Aryan or Turanian, and differences of climate, tropical or temperate, have nothing to do; and if the Siamese are of opinion that Buddha taught them the best and securest way to this, who shall blame them for their veneration of his memory, and of the symbols which betoken his actual presence among men?

When the short prayer or meditation is over, a few flowers, should the worshipper have them ready to hand, are offered, and a pastille or two lighted and left to burn; after which devotional acts our pilgrim is free to apply himself to the business most grateful to the genuine Siamese, body and mind, that, namely, of looking about him and doing nothing in particular. For occupations like these the place is admirably suited; the moist warmth of the forest air, the clear, pale, blue sky, the bright sunlight on rock and tree; the gay holiday groups of men and women, with flowers white and yellow in their black hair; the orange-coloured robes of the priests sprinkled frequent among the half-naked lay pilgrims, relieving the ruddy brown, else the prevailing tone of a Siamese crowd; while gold, at least gliding, marble, and purple—the three constituents of classic splendour, the triple ideal of Théophile Gautier and Imperial Rome,—make up the foreground in a scene where men, women, children, dress, flowers, leaves, sky, sunshine, all unite in one bright smile, and harmonise in one festival of colour, form, and light. Nor is sound wanting; for close at the entrance door of the shrine, between the portico and the outer balustrade, a band of musicians, provided by the liberality of some wealthier pilgrims, have taken place, thirty performers or more, on the polished pavement, and seated there among a delighted crowd, keep up on their various instruments, some harmonious enough, an untiring succession of tunes, or rather of notes, by no means devoid of melody, accompanied from time to time by the voice of some trained singer; the whole producing a pleasant, and, above all, a very cheerful effect. Of all Asiatic music the Siamese is generally held the best—a moderate praise, as those who have attended Persian, Arabian, Hindoo, or Malay, not to say Chinese performances, will testify. However, in the

opinion of the pilgrim audience the Phra-Bat concert is evidently perfection itself; and does undoubtedly, especially when heard at a moderate distance in the open air, chime in with, and in a manner complete the holiday character of the scene. But whether listening to the music or otherwise intent, the multitude of worshippers without the temple and within are manifestly of the mind that religion and pleasure, merriment and devotion, are not only by no means incompatible terms, but are rather closely connected with and auxiliary to each other. Here all is ornament and glitter, mirth, music, and laughter, nothing solemn, nothing mysterious, nothing awful, no "dim religious light," no sacred gloom, no fear-inspiring rites. The bloody sacrifices of Greece and Rome, the monster-peopled twilight of Hindoo worship, the melancholy symbols of pain and death so frequent in Catholic sanctuaries, the dull, weary decorum of a Protestant church—none of these have place in Phra-Bat, where, on the contrary, all combines to announce that religion is something joyful, something belonging to the bright side of life, and to be approached accordingly. Right or wrong, it is anyhow a pleasant view of things, and one that so far does credit to the good sense of those who take it. And even were Buddhism the pessimist theory that some have, though erroneously, imagined it to be, it is unquestionably optimism in practice.

Besides the actual footprint, or, to speak more closely in accordance with general belief, the rock-cavity which betokens it, there is yet within the "Maha-Dop" another object intimately connected with the peculiar purport of the shrine. This is a gilt plate of copper, in dimensions corresponding exactly with the miraculous hollow itself, but bearing in relief facsimiles of the various symbols said to have been originally impressed on the stone; and of which a minute description is given in Mr. H. Alabaster's 'Modern Buddhist,' a work published ten years ago. According to this author, the number, and for the most part the character, of the emblems tally with those found in the reputed footmarks of Buddhist Burmah and Ceylon. In the Phra-Bat itself some of the mystic types are

essentially Siamese or, I rather think, Cambodian; but far the greater part have reference to the complicated absurdities of Hindoo mythology, those incrustations of later Buddhism, and as such scarcely merit notice here. Nor do the Siamese themselves, for aught I could discover, attach much importance to any of the hundred and eight grotesques, the sacred wheel or "Chakr" alone excepted. The gilt plate itself is placed leaning against the inner wall, opposite the footprint, and is for the pilgrims an object of some curiosity, but of no veneration.

Like copies of the Phra-Bat, with its array of emblems, some in stone, some in plaster, gilt or plain, are to be met with in many other temples throughout Siam; these are often the objects of supplementary pilgrimages, made at the same time of year as that to the original. A few of these are, curiously enough, surrounded by four distinct outlines, each three or four inches wider and longer than the other, neatly traced out on the indented surface. The most remarkable of the kind that it has been my luck to visit was at Pamok, a place of some note in Siamese annals, not far from the ancient capital, Khrung-Khao, or Ayuthia; and here an old and learned monk informed me that the quintuple engravement referred to five different appearances of Buddha, in each of which the stature of the holy man was proportioned to one or other of these gigantic footmarks, a tradition of which no other record appears to exist. The only Siamese image of Buddha himself, said to be an exact likeness of the saint, and indeed to be of supernatural make, is a standing figure about fourteen feet high; the two feet are planted firmly close together on the ground; the left hand hangs down open by the side; the right is raised as though in admonition or benediction, and bears a small "Chakr" or circle, surrounded by a lotus border, displayed on the palm. This statue—a plaster one—occupies a very pretty temple on the wooded rocks of Ta-ra-mamoun, a long way north up the great Meinam river; it was held in great esteem by the late king, and is still much resorted to by pilgrims. Ancient it certainly is not, nor has it any claim in beauty of form or feature, let alone size, to be a correct likeness of one whom all annalists

agree in describing as exceptionally handsome. But it is remarkable that of all monumental statues of Buddha throughout Siam, this alone is in a standing attitude, the rest are seated or reclining; and of these two postures Chinese devotion affects by preference the former, Siamese, characteristically enough, the latter.

Without the "Maha-Dop," but on the same level and close beside it, are two handsome "Phra-chedis," or, as Fergusson would style them, topes; broad-based cones, surrounded by deep mouldings, and tapering upwards into spires, often of great height. The lower stages of the "Phra-chedi" are not unfrequently square; the central part has a bell-like form; the building itself is invariably solid. A relic, a small image of some costly material, or some like object, is said to be commonly concealed in the centre of the mass, but is honoured by no particular reverence distinct from that allowed to the "Phra-chedi" itself. Hardly any temple in Siam but has one or more of these pyramid spires in attendance on it, and often out-topping it greatly; that, for instance, reared not many years since amid the marsh-lands of Phra-pathom, east of Bangkok, falls little short of four hundred feet in height from base to gilded summit, but the design is unfortunately not worthy of the giant proportions of the edifice, and the general effect clumsy and poor. Another frequent, and by no means ungraceful adjunct of a Buddhist temple is the "Phra-prang." Its significance is much the same as that of the "Phra-chedi," but the form is that of a stout obelisk, deeply fluted, and brought by a succession of re-entering angles from a square into an octangular shape; intricate mouldings divide it into stages gradually diminishing as they ascend, till all the lines of building are gathered together into a point at top. Like the "Phra-chedi," the "Phra-prang" is solid; but four steep flights of steps often lead up the sides for about one-third of the height, where each gives access to a small Buddha-tenanted shrine hollowed out in the body of the pile. On no form of sacred building do the Siamese lavish more architectural and decorative ornament, and in none is the general result more

thoroughly satisfactory—thanks to the skilful combination of vertical and horizontal lines, which give the fullest possible effect to height and size, while affording in their intersections fair scope for any amount of ornamental detail to complete without complicating or overloading the outline. A good specimen of this sort of monument is the "Phra-prang," known as that of "Wat Chang" at Bangkok, which, though not two hundred feet high, looks not only infinitely grander, but even loftier than the ungainly edifice of Phra-pathom. Both kinds of building, the one holding the place of the Egyptian pyramid, the other of the obelisk, here however on the small scale befitting the broken character of the scenery around them, cluster round the "Maha-Dop" of Phra-Bat, and show their slender and well-proportioned outlines through the green shades of bamboo, palm, and forest-tree, like white specks jotted at random all over the sides of the hill and up to its very summit; whither the pilgrim ascends for the greater part of the distance by a stone causeway, solidly and skilfully constructed amid the wild confusion of rock and boulder, but now neglected and in many places broken down. Tradition ascribes—but I doubt with what correctness—the construction of this work to Phya Vichaien, the notorious Constantine Falcon, a Greek renegade, who, from the rank of a common sailor, rose, by sheer cleverness and audacity, two centuries since, to be prime minister of Siam; and about whose history both French and Siamese legends have clustered thickly, crediting him, like the Solomon of the East and the Charlemagne or Barbarossa of the West, with much in which he had probably little or no share. Anyhow, as the principal and immediate cause of this adventurer's downfall was his too open patronage of the French missionaries, those normal precursors of French military occupation, and his rash endeavour to subvert in their favour the Buddhist priesthood and religion, it is scarcely probable that he should have contributed to an undertaking in honour of that chiefest and central symbol of Buddhism, the Phra-Bat. About half-way up the mountain there is a small natural cave, much frequented by bats and pilgrims; but neither this nor a much larger cave at the foot of

an adjoining hill offer any object of much interest. Caves of this sort, some of them, however, like that of Pechaburi, near the western sea-coast, beautifully adorned with pendent stalactites, are common enough throughout the calcareous rocks of Southern Siam; and some of them are of great extent. The topmost ascent to the pretty miniature copy of the "Maha-Dop" that crowns the hill is difficult and proportionately meritorious, besides offering the immediate and welcome reward of a noble view far over forest, rice-field, and winding river, till the blue mountain-ranges close it in to the north and east; while southward a small cluster of dark rocks, starting abrupt and island-like from the green plain at about thirty miles' distance, marks the second bourne of the Siamese yearly pilgrimage, namely, the Phra-Chai, which, space permitting, we will visit also.

Before however we take leave of the Phra-Bat, I ought to make mention of a curious group of statues, said to represent the celebrated Siamese monarch, Phra-Narai, conqueror of Cambodia, and two of his chief ministers. These figures, made of plaster thickly gilt, stand under a shed near the "Maha-Dop," the king, as befitting, in the centre. Portrait or not, the coarse but powerful features of the image, the rounded eyes, wide nostrils, and heavy jaw, well become the fierce warrior who accomplished his war-vow by literally washing his feet in the blood of his captive Cambodian rival. The statue, if taken from the life, must be about three centuries old; I myself incline to think it a copy of some lost original. The three figures are all dressed in the old Siamese two-cloth fashion; the crown on the monarch's head resembles in design that still in use, but is less ornate, and smaller. The amplitude of court decorations is apt to be in inverse proportion to their real significance. A second statue, also said to represent Phra-Narai, stands by itself in a niche beside the rock-steps that lead up to the shrine; but from the distorted ferocity of its features, and the fantastic weapon grasped in its hand, I am inclined to think that it is really designed for the likeness of Chao-Khao-Tok, the tutelary spirit of the mountain, an angel demon of

great power, and venerated accordingly. The principal shrine, however, of this præternatural potentate is not here, but at the southernmost spur of the hill, a mile or so distant, on the main road leading from Ayuthia to Phra-Bat; where every pilgrim, the king himself, should he come this way, not excepted, must needs dismount before it, and offer respectable homage to the ill-favoured figure, where it scowls and threatens with axe and dagger the passers by. Comfort may however be derived from the re-assuring effigy of a "Thevada," or Siamese angel, half woman, half bird, that stands with a drawn sword immediately behind the ill-natured "Chao," as though to keep him within due bounds of moderation.

Here we come across a stratum of ideas much older in Siam, nor in Siam only, than either Buddhism or any other reasoned worship or creed whatever; and which holds its own, partly in spite of, and defiance of, the official belief, partly as incorporated into it. Every place, but more especially every mountain or hill, every river, every lake, every well, every forest, has in Siamese popular opinion its guardian "Chao," literally "master" or "lord," a sort of local genius, spirit, influence, or demon, sometimes benevolent—that is, if approached with proper respect—but more often spiteful and capricious, inflicting illness, insanity, and other woes on whoever thoughtlessly offends him, or even leaves him unacknowledged and unhonoured. Rarely visible, the "Chao" is not the less believed in, and claims to himself a large share of Siamese veneration, though the offerings and ceremonies by which he is propitiated are fortunately of a very harmless, often childish character; unlike the dark and cruel superstitions attendant in some parts of India, Africa, and too many other lands on such like belief. Akin to the idea of the local "Chao,"—an idea, under one form or other, scarce less ancient and less universal than the human race itself—is the fancy of a household familiar or spirit, attached to every dwelling large or small; and in whose honour a little model house may often be seen raised on posts, and decorated with coloured rags or flowers, close by the real cottage. Ruined buildings, of which there is no lack in Siam, old towers, deserted temples, each of

these has its "Chao," generally a dangerous one; so too have villages and towns every one, but of a more benevolent and protective character. That ghosts, phantoms, spectres, and all the goblin crew that make night hideous, even an occasional vampire included, swarm in Siamese no less than in Servian, Russian, or Albanian darkness, need scarce be said. But I spare the details, which may be found copiously enough in the laborious and, in most respects, accurate work, of Adolf Bastian, the best, if not indeed the only trustworthy European source of information regarding the Siam of our days. What has already been said may suffice to show that here, as elsewhere, religion has a two-fold aspect, the official, logical, and avowed one, and the popular, instinctive, and unavowed, each of which has its influence, but the former more over the upper, the latter over the lower classes, though neither are altogether outside of the two-fold range. For indeed both orders of belief, rightly understood, even if distinct from each other, are not opposed, but rather parallel, and both may consistently find place, though not on a footing of absolute equality, in the same mind. Here at Phra-Bat the miraculous footprint of the great teacher and ascetic may appropriately serve as type of the former; while the mountain "Chao," with his scowl and hatchet, exemplifies the latter.

Yet one more gaze at Phra-Bat before our horses' heads are finally turned from it, and the dense interlacement of the bamboo thicket has hidden it, as soon it must, from our eyes. The sight is one of peculiar beauty. Central in the view stands the gracefully proportioned "Maha-Dop," with its range of stately columns, its pyramidical roof of innumerable flame-points, its lofty spire, its justly harmonised tints of purple, crimson, and gold, the whole set off to perfection by a fantastic background of piled-up rocks, white shrines and spirelets, yellow-flowered shrubs, plumy bamboo-tufts, tall fan-palms, wide-branching trees, and a confusion of gold green leaves glittering under the pale bright sky and dazzling sun of the tropics—a fairy structure in a fairy land; itself incorpsed and deminiatured, like Shakespeare's good horseman, into that on and amid

which it is placed. Architecture and scenery, art and nature are here at one. Perfect harmony with its surroundings, or rather that the building should be itself a compendium and perfectioning of those surroundings, such is the first, but, unfortunately for modern Europe, now the most often forgotten condition of architectural success. An evil day was it for Siam when the mania of pseudo-European imitation, that bane of Asiatic art, first invaded Siam, where in the capital especially, and its neighbourhood, mean copies of third-rate European models, vile in themselves, and viler yet from the incongruity of their placement, or misplacement rather, too often insult the eye. When will men learn—that is, the men of our day, for the men of past years seem to have scarce needed such a lesson —that architecture can no more be imported from without than climate, nor art than mind? Saddest of all when a nation like the Siamese, birth-endowed with a style thoroughly suited to the land, and capable of indefinite development and improvement from within, throws away its own proper jewel for the false paste and sham brilliants of what it can neither adapt, nor even rationally copy. For not more surely does the blight shrivel the leaf, nor the evening gloom the day, than does the taint of European mimicry make to vanish every trace of inborn Asiatic art—form, colour, proportion, grace, dignity, the very soul itself. Whether Siam throughout her length and breadth is to add one more instance to the over many that Asia has already to show, I know not, but fear it much; the precedent is but too wide, the example too contagious.

A footprint is an easily-imagined symbol of a departed presence, and as such is common to many countries and many memories. A shadow is a more refined, a subtler emblem, and one more rarely employed. Though realised nowadays after a fashion by science, and embodied in the sufficiently vulgar and vulgarising form of photography, the idea in itself would seem to belong to the region of poetry rather than of fact; and the direct permanence of such a token to be a matter of fancy or miracle, not of ordinary sense. The Siamese imagination,

however, which, although in most respects a very limited one, is vivid enough within a certain range, has, in its veneration for its great lawgiver, added the shadow to the footprint, and claims for the land the honour of possessing not the more material only, but the more spiritualised token of the holy memory. And thus it comes to pass that the greater number of the yearly pilgrims, after accomplishing their visit to Phra-Bat, regain the main road, that is, the river, and follow it up for a considerable distance among shoals and rapids, till they reach on its banks the little village of Ta-Oi, whence a path leads for seven or eight miles across country south, to the hills of Phra-Chai, the "shadow" or "reflection of the lord." After traversing an open expanse of rice-fields and meadows, the road for its latter half lies through a forest of great beauty, where stately trees, towering often to fifty or sixty feet of massive trunk before they throw out the lowest of their giant branches, overshadow the dense perplexity of dwarf palm, garlanded creepers, glossy undergrowth, and whatever the tropics produce of most luxuriant and loveliest in flower and leaf. Emerging from the wood, the path suddenly opens on a small half-cleared space, overhung by a huge precipice, the side of a mass of lime-stone-rock that rises sheer full three hundred feet above the plain. A steep flight of granite steps, here, as at Phra-Bat, dexterously let into the piled-up boulders on one side, leads to a narrow ledge running along the face of the otherwise perpendicular cliff, at least seventy feet from the ground. Here nestles a little group of miniature shrines, pyramidical Phra-chedis and quaint monuments, following the line of the rock till, just where its width is greatest, the whole breadth up to the very marge is taken up by a quadrangular inclosure; three sides of the building are formed by a columnar arcade, closed by windowless walls without, but open inwards to the central and unroofed court; the fourth side is the overhanging precipice itself, a mass of grey rock going up to the sky overhead.

Here, on the smooth stone surface, devotion of fancy attempts with various success, to discern the faintly-limned outline of a human form—the form of Buddha, who certainly could not,

throughout all Southern Siam have chosen a fitter spot than this almost inaccessible shelf of rock for undisturbed meditation. This is the celebrated "Phra-Chai," the holy shadow or likeness, said to have been first revealed to the same fortunate huntsman who discovered the yet more celebrated Phra-Bat, and about the same time. The visibility of the likeness is, however, so says the popular voice, proportioned to the merits of the beholder: while the favour of discerning it is wholly refused to the unbelieving and the wicked, and is only partially accorded to any virtue except the highest. My Siamese companions, of whom there was a round dozen, and myself, would seem according to this test to have occupied a medium or average post on the scale of goodness; for all of us, by dint of hard staring, managed to make out a kind of shadow-tracing on the rock before us, though no two of us agreed as to its exact resemblance. Thus, while I described a sitting figure, another beholder pronounced it to be in a standing position; some said it was colossal, others of ordinary human size. When I add that the face of the rock is weather-stained, and marked with intersecting lines of cleavage and stratification, I think that I have given as satisfactory an explanation of any freaks imagination may play in fancied combinations and likenesses as need be asked.

Much seen, however, or little—and I never yet met a Siamese who had the moral courage to say that he had seen nothing at all—this shadow-haunted scarer is in great honour; and the open area of the temple was already, at the time of my visit, though a full fortnight before the appointed term of pilgrimage, full of devout worshippers, while the air was thick with pastille smoke wreathing upwards against the wondrous rock. The building itself with its light arcade, and lotus ornaments lavishly bestowed on cornice and capital, is a pretty specimen of Siamese architecture at its best; graceful turret-like pinnacles crown the angles, and the portals, with their quasi-Egyptian outline, flanked by well-proportioned columns, are models of their kind. A *facsimile* of the sacred footprint, carved and gilt, occupies the centre floor of the court. The remainder of the rock-ledge, which continues in an irregular and break-neck fashion some

way further along the mountain-side, is left free to groups of pilgrims, perched here and there, perhaps as much to enjoy the pure air and lovely view over the tree-tops as for any other reason. Another flight of steps winding far in its difficult ascent conducts to a small temple on the very summit of the mountain. The building is a copy, so far as I could make out by the style and period to which it appears to belong, not of the present, but of the original and more ancient "Maha-Dop" of Phra-Bat. Indeed, all the principal constructions at the Phra-Chai seem of comparatively ancient date; and their secluded position may well have saved them from the ravages of Burmese invaders, and Chinese or Peguan bandits, so fatal to many of the noblest Siamese monuments during the last century. But it is a real misfortune that the use of carved inscriptions, commemorative of names, events, and dates, so frequent, however difficult to decipher, in the valleys of the Nile and the Tigris, should be wholly unknown in the region of the Meinam; while the palm-leaf records, deposited, a prey to damp, white ants, and neglect, in the recesses of the "Wats," are for the most part as little valuable in their significance as durable in their substance. The noble, often colossal, monuments of Siam, its temples, its palaces, its spires, its obelisks, its giant statues, stand or crumble on plain and mountain side, mute survivors of a speechless past, tottering boulders on the cliff-edge of the dark secular ocean that year by year washes them down into its immemorial depths, till the buildings themselves shall have followed the builders, the monuments the memories, and of either not a trace remains.

The customary season for performing the Phra-Chai pilgrimage follows immediately on that of Phra-Bat, falling consequently in the latter part of the same lunar month; nor is the concourse much inferior in numbers. Already at the date of my visit an extempore bamboo village, with its usual adjuncts of a market, a cockpit, resting-places, preaching-sheds, booths, and even a few tolerable houses had sprung up; and groups of saffron-robed priests with great umbrellas sauntered about, and a mixed multitude of Siamese, Laos, and Chinese not a few, roamed at large, or rested under the shade of the giant trees; while buying

and selling, music and sport, gambling too on a small scale, and other amusements were going on not less briskly than at Phra-Bat itself. Whatever the occasion, wherever the shrine, religion and merry-making, worship and festivity, are inseparable in the Siamese idea. As to the priests, or monks rather—for their attributions would seem to bring them more correctly under the latter heading than the former—they are much given to pilgrimage; and frequent were the bands of them already on the road, attended by whole retinues of young scholars or disciples, also in yellow, all invariably travelling on foot, and setting a truly edifying example of voluntary poverty and simplicity of life. For so it is, that of all the priesthoods or monkhoods throughout the world, none has been so persistently faithful to the ideal proposed by its founder as the Buddhist; none so closely, for the outward manner of life, at any rate, followed the master's example; none so steadily resisted the allurements, not of pleasure merely, but a much rarer achievement for monks and priests, if history tells true, of wealth and ambition; none so honestly refrained from whatever they professed to have renounced alike in public and private life. A proof among many others that whatever may be the defects of Buddhism it is a system thoroughly well adapted to the character of the nations that have adopted it, and not least among such of the Siamese.

A thing worthy of note. The great world-famous pilgrimages of Rome and Jérusalem have long since been matters of history; Benares no more gathers as of old her millions of Hindoo votaries; the Meccan concourse is but a feeble remnant of the past; the lesser shrines of Loretto or Compostella, of Kerbela and Meshed Ali, of the Indian or the South American peninsula, have well nigh lapsed into forgetfulness; while the spasmodic efforts to revive the like in France or elsewhere collapse in speedy indifference and neglect. Not so in this strange survival of past ages, this land forgotten by the years, this land of Siam. Here, to judge by appearances at least, there is no abandonment nor falling-off in the national reverence paid to the great East-Asian ascetic and teacher, or to his memorials, footmark, or

likeness. Visited duly with all honour and ceremony both by the late and by the present king, indeed by every monarch in turn of the reigning dynasty, the shrines are in good repair, the offerings abundant, and the multitude of yearly pilgrims to each attests that the popular devotion keeps at least even pace with the royal. *Esto perpetua.* It was by adopting the religion, and obeying the precepts of Buddha, that Siam raised herself from mere barbarism, took a place among the kingdoms, and attained whatever power and prosperity she has possessed or is ever likely to possess; and the best wish of her friends may rightly be that she may long continue faithful as ever to the memory of her first law-giver, and to the system symbolised at Phra-Bat and Phra-Chai.

THE THREE CITIES.

To this Essay, first published in the 'Cornhill' for March 1878, I have left its title, though one of unfulfilled promise; as of the Three Cities one only, and that one in many respects the least interesting of the three, is described; the other two receiving but slight and passing notice. This curtailment was due to want partly of space, partly of time; of space, as it soon became evident to the writer that not one but three distinct essays, if indeed three might suffice, would be needed to complete the programme; of time, because even while I prepared to undertake the triple work, events which no anticipation short of prophetic could have forecast removed me for half a convex globe from regions I had but then learnt to appreciate and to love. Would it were otherwise!

On the island-fringed shore of the far Asiatic East, within a geographical circle of less than sixty miles in diameter, built on almost identical soil, bathed by the same waters, canopied by the same sky, rise the Three Cities, three nationalities, three civilisations, three histories, three destinies; united in the closest juxtaposition of circumstance and site; sundered by divergence wide as the extremest limits of human mind and race. Hong Kong, Canton, Macao; three monuments respectively raised by England, China, Portugal; three embodiments of as many most dissimilar energies, distinct in their starting-point, concurrent in their course, divergent in their goal.

Not sisters, though linked together by the closest ties of mutual adoption; not strangers, though aliens in language, in institutions, in blood; not hostile, though confronting each other with the bitterest antipathy of caste; not friendly, though compelled to union by links intimate as existence itself; rivals, yet associated in common interest; associates, yet necessary, unreconciled rivals; leagued, but unloving; repellent, yet

allied; essentially three, accidentally one. Three tall trees from three most different seeds, unlike in flower, in foliage, in fruit; nor unlike only, but antagonistic, yet planted close side by side, expanding to the same atmosphere, nourished by the same elements, above, beneath. One of them a natural, indigenous growth, two with branches of indigenous life grafted into them, but exotic in root, in stem, in type; for, in spite of the busy, yellow-complexioned, long-haired population, that swarms almost equally in the streets of all three, Canton is scarcely more Chinese throughout than Macao is truly Portuguese, and Hong Kong English.

Hong Kong, genuine offspring of British energy, and whose every feature bears the unmistakable impress of the great parent. The granite quays fringing the lake-like harbour, the tall merchant offices and cavernous warerooms beyond, the solidly-constructed buildings, where artistic taste and architectural beauty are not, but comfort, usefulness, and stability are, climbing tier over tier far up the steep hillside, that hill mere barren rock scarce forty years since; the skilful windings of the flood-defying roads, triumphantly secure amid precipices down which a goat might look with justified diffidence; the dense, often exotic, foliage of the tree-planted gardens, frequent among the trim dwellings, the costly public buildings and huge works of associated enterprise, reaching from the wharves and docks below to the white signal-station and flagstaff that crown the granite peak nigh two thousand feet in perpendicular height above: these are—and whose else could they be?—the marks of England, the impress of her seal, the bold firm line stamped on earth's face by her, and by her alone.

Not a character of those in which England writes herself on the world's great page but is here plainly legible. Her liberal welcome is seen in the countless sails of all merchant-flags, European, Asiatic, American, Australasian, native, foreign, dragon-bannered, crossed, three-coloured, striped, chequered, starred, ship and steamer of every size, every construction, every colour, not scattered over, but literally covering, concealing, the

still harbour waters. Seen too is her watchfulness—may it never fail her!—over her own rights and over the rights of those she shelters—may these too never be forgotten or lightly discarded amid the giddiness of fanatical clamour, and the calculated bigotry of party!—in the cruisers, the gun-boats, the war-ships and their disciplined crews, the white flag and the black metal, the protection and menace of the seas. Nor less is her mercantile supremacy feebly foreshadowed by the Tyres of antiquity, and the Genoas and Venices of later days, proclaimed in the long ranges of warehouses, piled with goods and thronged with dealers along the quay; nor her provident care of health, and that love of fresh air and the enjoyment of nature in which so few even of her European sisters share, in the broad highways, the tree-planted walks, the public gardens, the wide spaces for popular gathering and amusement, freely allotted where the sacrifice of every inch of ground means a sacrifice of golden wealth. Seen is England's imperial munificence in the size and solidity of the public buildings, the Town Hall, the Palace, the Club, the Barracks, the Hospitals; seen, too, is her poverty of artistic feeling in not so much the absence as the contradiction of architectural proportion and grace that characterises the exterior of almost every edifice; seen is her wise toleration of men's varied fancies in the close proximity of well-nigh every known fane, where each sect adores its own proper representative symbol of the One unknown Truth; seen, too, her childish toying with the puerilities of a dead past, in the Gothic structures that rear their incongruous pinnacles against a background of tropical rock and sky. What influence but the law-abiding rule of England could at a word call together and maintain in mutual security and orderly peace the motley, nor seldom faction-nurtured, crowd of the Hong Kong thoroughfares, with all their antipathies, their rivalries, their hereditary feuds, their daily jarrings? What even-handed justice but hers could so smoothe away in the level of caste-ignoring administration every local separation of race, and abolishing the jealous distinctions, too manifest elsewhere, of assigned "wards" and "quarters," bring Asiatic and European, white, dark, and yellow, hat, turban,

and braided queue, Chinese, Parsee, Briton, Portuguese, Malay, Australian—whom not?—to dwell side by side in the same street, on the same level? Truly Hong Kong is a compendium of the British Empire, as the British Empire of the world.

Every town, every village even, attentively considered, has its special characteristic, its proper epithet, the keynote of its expression, the air-tint of its landscape, the formula of its existence. Anglo-Chino-cosmopolitanism (I apologise, but a complex object demands a complex word) is the characteristic of Hong Kong. A British seaport, but on a Chinese coast, it has necessarily much of the Chinese, much of the cosmopolitan about it; its residents belonging chiefly to the former, its fluctuating population to the latter category. Were, indeed, the inhabitants of Hong Kong polled at any given moment, the English, numerically taken, would show for but a meagre figure on the list. A little leaven, yet potent not to leaven merely, but in a manner to assimilate the whole mass; a drop, but one that has diffused its own peculiar tint through all the waters, many-coloured else, of the entire pool.

Many-coloured indeed, and many-formed as is the inner life of Hong Kong, its outer aspect, as we gaze on it near at hand from the harbour in front, is essentially, undeniably English. Before us, it may be, is the deep-eaved, low-fronted Chinese temple, the large barn-like Portuguese church, the Arabo-Malay mosque, the Parsee Tower of Silence; but these, and whatever other typical buildings of public or private use attest the presence of the subject or protected races, modestly elude the eye, and hide themselves unobserved among the larger constructions and symmetrical masses proper to the English colonists. Ungraceful enough many of the constructions, heavy the masses; and yet a very lovely sight is Hong Kong as a whole. Close to the sparkling water's edge, curving with the little promontories and indentations of the mountain-base, run the town houses in a long white wavy strip, much narrower in appearance when looked at thus from a somewhat lower level than it really is, while the inevitable unsightlinesses of a large and crowded city are hidden from view by the stately warehouse

frontage. Next above this rises, in seemingly perpendicular steepness, a broad belt of dark and glossy green, the tree-shaded gardens, luxuriant though trim, that for five or six hundred feet upward from the sea, clothe the nakedness of the old granite slopes, and almost conceal the white dwellings nestled amid the pleasing shade, where forty years since—no more—existed neither house nor tree. Higher yet, towering to the violet-blue sky, rise the giant crags, the precipitous torrent-furrowed slopes, the massive mountain ridges, here grass-clad in bright emerald, there again naked boulders tinted red or grey; there dark with brushwood and low gnarled trees adown the track of some deep-cleft ravine; and amid grass and rock gleam out countless specks of liveliest yellow, blue, purple and red, tokens that even these comparatively barren shelves belong to the region emphatically and not undeservedly called the "Flowery Land." Clinging to the steepest slopes, like a red-tinted ribbon unrolled and let hang from mountain-crest to base, winds the well-constructed path for horse or foot from the town below to the Peak above; other tracks, each one a triumph of engineering skill, lead right and left amid gorge and precipice to remote villages and little anchorages on the further side of the central heights. Small Swiss-like cottages, the summer retreats of Hong Kong rank or wealth, glitter in the sun among the topmost crags; and from two thousand feet above land and sea towers England's flagstaff over all.

Such is the southward view: turning from it north, west, or east, the ship-peopled harbour shows as though closed in by the fantastic forms of high yellow-streaked mountains, the Chinese mainland chain, nor less by the countless peaks and crags of innumerable islands, some large, some small, some massive, some mere reefs; a labyrinth of land and water, of rock and shining inlet, of which the centre and heart is Hong Kong. On every side fisher hamlets, pretty enough at a distance, and dense Chinese trading-stations fringe the bay-indented coast; while here a white light-tower, there a fantastic dark outline of rocky pinnacle, breaks the larger landscape lines. Showered down over all, penetrating all, is the violet daylight known to

West-Indian skies, also on the tropical verge, but nowhere so pure, so delicate, so transparent as here in Eastern Asia, along the coasts of the furthermost, world-encircling sea.

A town built against steep hillsides, rising right from the water's edge, can hardly fail of being picturesque; and even where, owing to climate, material, soil, or local cause, the enlivenments of colour are wanting, beauty at least of outline will not be absent. Thus, for instance, Trebizond, Samsoon, Sinope, Cherasond, that ancient sisterhood of history and decay, dingy-tinted as they are, and overshaded besides by the murky Black Sea atmosphere, yet attract the eye by the grandeur of their outlines and position; dank dark ruins with broad spread lines of dense forest and cloud-veiled mountains for their background, they suit well with the gloomy waters of the Euxine below. But in the bright tropical, and in the yet brighter sub-tropical zone, grandeur, even where most present, is in a manner hidden under the exceeding charms of colour and light. From the countless towns and villages, each lovely to gaze on from the deck of the by-sailing yacht, of the Mediterranean coast, on to West Indian latitudes and Brazilian shores, seaports present an almost monotonous beauty; every voyager has the tale by heart. A known example, and one to which Hong Kong in some of its features offers a certain resemblance, is the much-visited port of St. Thomas in the West Indies; the first appearance and general outline of each have, to him who sees them entering either bay, a great deal in common. But the difference is in fact more than the likeness. For while the stateliness of its buildings and the verdure of its surroundings are what most distinguish Hong Kong, St. Thomas, though to the imaginative view of a Kingsley bosomed in orange-groves, displays in truth neither orange-groves nor any others round and amid its white dwellings to the average human eye, which ranges instead over a brown expanse of stunted "bush"; while the smallness of its dwelling-places gives the town somewhat of the appearance of a children's toy-box turned out at random adown the hills; the hills, themselves, too, are wanting in height, and commonplace in outline. What, however, St. Thomas lacks Hong Kong possesses, offering

to view just the right combination of brightness, tint, and colour, along with solidity, dignity, and size in the perfected proportionateness of all.

Again, "from the sea, charming, on shore, detestable," is the often-repeated verdict of the British voyager who first visits some Levantine Jaffa or Brazilian Rio; and, all due allowance made for British fastidiousness, there is only too often in the untidiness of a sub-tropical seaport interior wherewithal to justify the sentence. But it does not apply to Hong Kong. The town-streets, the principal thoroughfares at any rate, are broad and clean; the tree-shaded roads that wind among the gardens and residences higher up are of park-like trimness; nothing neglected, nothing dilapidated, offends the view. No quality, in fact, commends itself so much to the pleased visitor, especially if recent from the slovenly, tumble-down, patched-up cities too common in less favoured spots of the Asiatic tropics, than the neatness, the spruceness, the completeness of Hong Kong; all praiseworthy qualities, but especially the last, considering the frequent, and indeed, as it here happens, by no means remote, ravages of tempest and flood in this cyclone-swept region.

Towns, like men, age quickly in the tropics; and thirty years, though of little account for the change they bring in temperate Europe, are in Indo-Chinese latitudes more than enough, unless constant attention and repair prevent, to confer an air of decrepitude and decay on the buildings no less than on the builders. But no blotched and crevassed wall, no bush-grown ruin, no broken pavement, no grass-mantled court, announces the decrepitude of Hong Kong; energy, not the unsteady, often misdirected, energy of a colony's first youth, but the enduring, judicious energy of vigorous manhood, is her very type, her characteristic, her keynote, not less so than art of Florence, enjoyment of Vienna, majesty of Rome.

Energy is but another name for life; and of human life scarcely any of its Old World varieties, and not many from among those of the New, are absent from Hong Kong. The predominant ones, of course, are the English and the Chinese.

Of the latter, though, numerically taken, the most abundant, and, next to the English, the most influential in the colony, little need here be said; we shall have a much better opportunity of studying it in its native home, in Canton, where it attains its complete development. But, be it much or be it little in quantity and importance, essentially it is the same everywhere; of all nations in the world, the Jews themselves not excepted, the Chinese, while the readiest to expatriate themselves, are the least modified by expatriation. How many ages of climatic and local influences, how many generations traversed under foreign rule, amid foreign institutions, might by the slow operation of natural selection, struggle for life, survival of the fittest, and so forth, suffice to bring them into somewhat of even approximate conformity with the dominant races among which they settle, in California say, in Queensland, in the streets of Calcutta or the woods of Borneo, Darwin himself might, in the absence of so much as a hint, let alone a fact, to guide him, be puzzled to conjecture. But here, on their own soil, in daily intercourse with their fellow-countrymen of the great Empire, the Celestials are doubly proof against all influences of change. And hence the Chinese denizens of Hong Kong differ little or nothing, outwardly or inwardly, in dress, customs, or ideas, from their brethren of similar rank or occupation at Canton. When arrived there we may study them at our leisure. Enough for the present to say that in British Hong Kong the Chinese Club, known from the profession of its first founders as that of the "compradores" or "middle-men"; their Hospital, worthy in its orderly neatness and studious care to rank with many English hospitals, or even German; their large theatre, their quaint temples, and the other results of their combined and communal action, exhibit Chinese munificence, good taste, and methodical accuracy in a most favourable light.

As it is with the Chinese, so it is, after a manner, with the English. An Englishman self-exiled to the tropics dons a solar hat fearful and wonderful to behold, patronises light flannels, and occasionally white shoes, doubles and trebles his already frequent national ablutions, and even at times dines, greatly

daring, in a white jacket. More yet, he may, when absolutely compelled thereto by the fitness of things, exchange his favourite mode of locomotion, pedestrian or equestrian, for others peculiar to the land of his adoption, may recline in an Indian palanquin, or, as here in China, take seat in the uncomfortable sedan-chair. Never surely was a contrivance so thoroughly adapted for making, in appearance at least, slaves of your fellow-creatures and an invalid of yourself; and yet to invent anything else equally well suited to the precipitous inclines of Hong Kong, or the narrow lanes of a Chinese city, would, all agree, be a task beyond the inventive genius of man born of woman. But to return to our Englishman. Despite the modifications just indicated in his outer self, he is yet, for all essential characteristics, the same identical man who rode to hounds in the county, or sat on a high stool at a City desk, who dined in a dress-coat at a quarter past eight, and went, mayhap, in a cylinder hat to church on the Sabbath morn; unchanged, unchangeable, as Byron's ocean, or Shakespeare's "northern star." For the rest, his works declare him; by these he is best known; and of these, as here displayed on the furthest Eastern marge, I have spoken, cursorily indeed, yet I think sufficiently already.

Next in local importance and mercantile wealth to the British community ranks the German; that nationality destined, it would seem, to become in no distant future our rival on equal terms, perhaps even our supplanter in the world's commerce. Like the English on the one hand, and the Chinese on the other, the Germans have their own social centre, their own club, and, I believe, their own appropriate place of worship; a thriving, thrifty race. Like Englishmen, too, a hundred and more degrees of longtitude or latitude make little difference in Germans; not indeed so absolutely unplastic as ourselves, yet slow to adopt the usages of others, reluctant to modify their own.

The Portuguese, rarely of genuine European origin, mostly of mixed or Asiatic strain, are as much superior in numbers as inferior in weight to the English. A few merchants lead the van of the Lusitanian host; its bulk is a "mixed multitude" of clerks, accountants, writers, apothecaries, and the like. Intelli-

gent, good-natured, sociable, but with somewhat of Reuben's doom upon them, they lack the backbone of the Teutonic—I use the word with becoming diffidence—races, and the elastic energy of the genuine Celt. But their minuter delineation is best reserved for a survey of their neighbouring headquarters, Macao. To complete the European, or quasi-European, catalogue, come a few French, Italians, Spaniards, and Milanese; some Danes also. These last excepted, those now briefly catalogued form the bulk of the Catholic population, which includes a small number of the Chinese themselves; and is supplemented by a whole army of clergy, regular and secular, congregationists, nuns, and missionaries of various orders and robes; all, like their Protestant rivals, who are also numerous in the field, intent on the well-meant but infructuous task of pouring very new wine into very old bottles—task which for three centuries and more baffled the skill of the old-society Jesuits themselves, though masters the like of whom the world has never seen of the soul-winning craft, and with a Xavier or a Ricci at their head. Where such have failed who can hope success? However, the result, real, though diminutive, which yet attends missionary efforts, and sustains the labourers in an ungrateful vineyard by the ever-delusive hope of greater things and a more abundant vintage to come, here falls, as at Singapore, and indeed elsewhere generally, to the share of the Catholic apostles rather than the Protestant—a circumstance the reasons of which are sufficiently well known to all.

Jews, at least those distinctively such, are few at Hong Kong; nor, indeed, as I am told, do they dwell numerously in any of the tents of the Celestial Empire, whether those tents belong, as is commonly supposed, to the Japhetic camp or not. Jacob and Laban together would not, if the truth be told, make much profit out of a contract with a Chinaman. But the "highly respectable" Parsee in his quasi-episcopal garb, the turbaned Arabo-Malay trader, the dusky Hindoo, the energetic Japanese, and many other Asiatic types of less note have their representatives here. Towering amid all, the grim Sikhs, from amongst whom the strong and well-organised police force of the

place is mostly recruited, slowly stalk past in moustached majesty, offering the completest contrast that fancy could devise to the sleek, smooth-faced, smiling, briskly-moving Chinese.

Such is Hong Kong; a picture chequered to minuteness in detail, uniform in general colouring, and that colouring English. Examined, however, more closely, and with the eye of a resident rather than of a traveller, a further characteristic, hardly perceptible indeed on the surface, but existent immediately below it, and extending downwards to the lowermost layers of colonial life, comes to view. It is the deep demarcation line that sunders the entire community into two parts, a line not less real because at first sight unapparent, a gulf all the more impassable because not dug by law and ordinance, but by custom and instinct. On the one side of this social gulf are the English, with a few, I might say, a very few, of their European compeers; on the other almost all those included in the general designation of "foreigners"; but especially the Asio-Portuguese and the Chinese natives of the land. Years of a common home, common pursuits, common interests, have not for social intimacy and domestic intercourse, hardly even for mutual knowledge of each other's characters, habits, and modes of thought, brought the Briton and the Chinaman one step nearer to each other than they were when the flag of British sovereignty first waved over the island thirty-five years ago. Between English and other nationalities the division is not quite so rigorous, yet the barrier-fence exists, and as yet gives no sign of weakening at any point. Something of the kind may be observed in many other British colonies of the Old World and of the New; but in none, I believe, is exclusiveness carried so far as in Hong Kong, where circumstances, many of them beyond the control of the colonists themselves, have promoted, and in a manner rendered inevitable, a condition not otherwise wholly uncongenial to the British mind. There is something to be said in its favour, something also in blame.

Within, however, its comparatively narrow limits, necessary or self-imposed, Hong Kong society—the English section of it, I mean—is remarkable for its cordial geniality, and liveliness

tempered by refinement and education. Many are the British colonies, if settlements be not the correcter title, deservedly commended for similar qualities in the far East; but in none, so at least I am told, can the National Club boast a better reading-room and library than those at Hong Kong; no Public Hall show choicer diversions, gayer dances, or sprightlier amateur performances; no race-course is the scene of better contested emulation, no tennis-lawns more frequented, no saloons brighter than hers. Without depreciation of her half-sisters, let England's eldest-born daughter in the Celestial Empire have her due.

A goodly city, a goodly colony, this Hong Kong of the present. But the forward-stretching link of real, surely, yet undefined significance that will not let us rest in acquiescent stability on the firm ground of what is, because dragging us ever on to the uncertain cloud-land of what is to be, compels us even here to lift up our eyes beyond the pleasing Hong Kong of the day to the possible Hong Kong of coming years in the foreshadowed destinies of Asio-British dominion.

Commanding as it does the main entry, the portal of the South Chinese Empire, and through it of the central provinces and inner sanctuary of the ancient shrine, as strong in position as secure in sheltered anchorage, alike easy of access to friends, and difficult of approach, if not impossible, to foes, Hong Kong can then only lose its nature-ensured importance when the power that now grasps it loses its own. Till then—a far distant day—it is the easternmost extremity of the mighty imperial lever, reaching from the far European West to the Chinese shore, and ever ready to move, it might be absolutely to overturn, the entire Middle Kingdom. Such it already is in English eyes, more so in the wakeful eyes of Continental jealousy: what then in the eyes of the Chinese themselves?

Very different indeed from the aspect of things to the fevered speculator of irritable Europe is that they assume in the quiet common-sense gaze of the placid Chinese. Nothing, in European estimate, irritates national antipathies more than territorial occupation; it is a thorn that, abiding in the wound, keeps it

ever festering; a centre-point round which gathers every worst feeling of contempt in the stronger power, hatred and desire of revenge in the weaker, aversion in both. Two centuries have not reconciled Spain to our presence in Gibraltar; the hostility of the Arabs is not less bitter now than forty years agone to the French settlers of Algiers; Ceuta maintains the Moorish and Christian feud. Could any Englishman endure for an instant the bare thought of a foreign flag, whatever its nationality, floating over the Portland heights? We occupy Hong Kong, a few hours distant, no more, from one of the greatest, the most important, the most national of Chinese cities; and the Chinese look on with not a frown on their smooth faces, not a thought but of quiet accommodation to circumstances, with a feeling not practically distinguishable from great indifference. Within the narrow but densely-peopled island, without it, along the village-fringed shores that stretch back to the wharves of Whampoa and the gates of Canton, the Chinese population shows itself, all due allowance made for the prejudices of mutual ignorance and difference of blood, friendly, kindly even, to the English—their first frays over, the Chinese dragon has no further misliking for St. George; rather seeks amicably to share with the stranger champion the favours of the Golden Princess and the treasures of her store.

Nations may, though rarely, be friends, their officials hardly or never; and it would be a millennium, or rather a very Utopia on earth, did no grudges, no complaints, no grievances exist between Chinese Hoppos and British harbour-masters, the retinue of the yellow flag and that of the Union Jack. Yet, considering the war of 1842, and the storming of Canton, with all that preceded and followed it, in 1857, remembering what passed at Tien-tsin in 1858, and what at Pekin in 1860, all recent dates, and, the first alone in a measure excepted, belonging to the living generation rather than the past, we must admit that the Chinese mind would have been justified in entertaining a far greater degree of alienation from us than exists at the present day. And if to these we add the daily bickerings kept up—with how much of blame on the one side, how much on the

other, is not here the place to inquire—of the smuggling trade; the shocks, of little consequence perhaps in themselves, but irritating from their frequency, between Chinese formalism and British roughhandedness, the vagaries of tourists, the intrusive bigotry of missionaries; and last, not least, the easily-made confusion in Chinese apprehension between English and other less law-abiding nationalities, European or New World, our wonder at Chinese tolerance, even good nature, even courtesy, may well increase to admiration. True that a diversity of ideas, of customs, wide enough to make the one race at first sight the seeming antipodes of the other, separates the Briton and the Chinaman; nor can we wish it done away. Little, indeed, does a nation gain—much, incalculably much, does it ever lose—by abandoning its ways for the ways of the alien, its usages for his usages, its fashions for his fashions, its gods for his gods. History in this, through all her pages, reads us only one lesson, and its latest illustration is no further from China than is Japan. But the fusion of mutual advantage, of good feeling, and of kindly intercourse is not less possible than beneficial; the more so that the glaring but superficial unlikeness between the British and the Chinese types covers much of deeply-seated real resemblance, nay, in some regards, identity of character. And in this fusion it is for us, the uninvited intruders on Chinese territory, to lead the way. Manchester goods and opium are excellent things of their kind, but honour, justice, good faith, and good government are more; of these, unless England be indeed untrue to her imagined self, we have plenty and to spare; these too we can in our measure communicate by a policy not wholly summed up in "*Væ victis*" and "Gunboats to the fore."

And of this wider policy what better basis could be found than in the British city that guards the entry of Southern China, the friendly though foreign Piræus of Canton? "Hong Kong for the merchants" has long been the colonial motto, and though, if taken absolutely, a narrow one, I would not say that at the outset it may not have been adequate to the requirements of the day. But its time has gone by, or rather it has been, in

its complete meaning, transferred to Shanghai and the busy Free Ports, situated indeed on Chinese soil, but dedicated by British protection to trade, and trade alone. This is their one obligation: well they fulfil it, and with it they may be content. But on our own national soil, within our own waters, "Hong Kong for the Empire" should now be our device. Elsewhere, even more abundantly than here, we have mercantile relations, mercantile interchange, mercantile duties, with China; why not, here at least, Imperial also? Why should not the "Flowery Land" be to us, in due process of time, not merely a market for our goods, but a recruiting ground for our nationality, for our armies, our navies, our enterprise, our manifold life? Wide range for our imperial growth; and its starting point, so we know its true bearing, is already made, is no other than Hong Kong. Born on British ground, or preferring it by exchange of permanent residence to their own, what hinders the extension of British national rights, the equalisation of British law, the privileges of British citizenship to the Chinese indwellers of the colony? Better surely subjects than aliens, union than division. Is England too weak a mother to nurse other children than those of her own island-womb? Are her means too restricted to adopt? Do the cords of her tent admit of no lengthening? Can her heart only fear, nor be enlarged to the gathering of the abundance of the sea? Idle fear! Unison of sympathy, of feeling, of thought, of purpose will follow close on unity of national existence; and Hong Kong may—we have but to will it—prove the first link in the golden band to bind in one the vastest energies of the East and of the West, China and England.

By such policy did ancient Rome consolidate that Empire which for five hundred years summed up the world in one citizenship, one name; this is

> The Seal of that most firm assurance
> Which bars the pit over destruction's strength.

More than inheritor of Rome's Empire, Prometheus of the age, England touches that Seal already by her world-wide colonies; why not grasp it, and make it her own?

Such is the youngest-born of the three sister-rivals, emblem of progressive energy, of expansive strength. Elder by uncounted centuries, her birth-date lost in the mists of fable, Canton is not less emblem also of strength, but more of stability, of energy, but energy linked to repose.

There are cities that once desolated have never risen again; there are others that ravaged not once but often ever renew their interrupted life, changed, it may be, somewhat in outward style, essentially the same. Babylon, Palmyra, Aventicum, are examples of the former; of the latter Damascus, Rome, Canton; hill-bandit, Tartar-French, English, each in turn has wasted land and town with sword and fire; to-day you pass through the gaily-decorated streets, amid smiling peace, prosperity, abundance, and, unless taught from history, you would never guess the ruin and horrors of scarce twenty years since. Hong Kong may fade, as Macao has already faded; not so Canton; her roots are those of the great Empire itself, her life its life—a life that has outlasted the birth, increase, decline, death of countless kingdoms, and may well yet outlast countless more.

Of Canton then, and of that third city, once a vigorous growth, now a withered memory, yet beautiful in decay, fallen Macao, there would be much to say; but time and circumstance, the boundary-marks of our little day, have traced me too narrow a line to admit of its enclosing, even in miniature, the vast dimensions of history, description, and thought that open out with the gateways of the Middle Kingdom, the Celestial Empire. But he who would realise, by analogy at least, what Egypt was in her earlier better days, before Hyksos or Persian, Greek or Roman, Arab or Turk, had dwarfed her down to the measure of their own lesser stature, let him visit Canton. Even there and without pursuing his path further into the wonders outstretched for thousands of leagues beyond, throughout the vastest as the most enduring of earth's kingdoms, he may form a not inadequate idea of the entire Empire, as he who has seen the pylons of the Rhamession or Edfou, and them only, may judge, nor hesitatingly, what were the glories of the Nile-Pharaohs, and what the greatness of their sway. Further investigation may

complete the details, but will not add much to the proportions of the first view.

Let him visit Canton. There he may study the results of a government based on reverence, on literature, on guarded rank, on respected age; of a priesthood kept within its proper limits of ceremonial observances and national rites, nor permitted to arrogate overweening dictation to the minds and souls of men; of administrative wisdom, wisely limiting itself to the good order, sufficiency, and happiness of man's actual life, without pretension or preoccupation for what may come after. There too he may see, what in Europe he will hardly see, in America never, how well it is with a nation that knows when it is well off, and knowing this prefers to enjoy in quiet the steady if not dazzling light of its own tried and hereditary lamp, to running after bright wills-of-the-wisp, delusive imitations, fancied progress, hoped improvement, and all the promise-phantoms of a restless vision. What particular "fifty years of Europe" those may be that the poet of our age pronounces "better than a cycle of Cathay" I know not; but should hardly fancy he intended the quinquagesimal that includes the Commune of 1871, or that of the chaos of 1793, any more than those lighted up by the hell-fires of the Inquisition, or the blood-stained days of the barons, first or last. Doubtless there is much that China might advantageously learn from Europe; but Europe too, unquiet, disintegrating Europe, might with at least equal advantage to herself take more than one lesson from Cathay. In Canton, in China, there are many wonders for the tourist; there are hints for the statesman also.

KIOTO.

Under a title which, though not misleading, is yet in some measure inadequate, this Essay is in substance at once a summary and an explanation of the mythical system that by the name of "Shinto" appears coœval with the first dawn of Japanese history, adds lustre to its brilliant noon, and blends even yet with the rays of its declining day. Its interest chiefly consists in the light which it incidentally throws on the so-called "Paganism" of Hellas, and, though less vividly, on that of Latium, to each of which, but most to the former, it is a counterpart, a translation from dead to yet living speech. Or it may not inaptly be described as the metaphysical complement of the ζῆν κατὰ φύσιν which the Japanese, like the Hellenes, once proposed to themselves as the true standard and highest excellence of existence. But rightly to appreciate the value as the defects of Shinto it is, I think, necessary to have studied in practice and on the spot, not the system merely,—if system be a fitting name for what professes to be and in great measure is a mere exposition of fact,—but even more the habits of mind, thought, and character from which it originally emanated, and which it still in some degree maintains and fosters among its votaries.

This Essay was published in the 'Fortnightly Review' of December 1881; since which date a progressive change has, I am told (I fain would hope inaccurately), come over the spirit of the Japanese dream, and "Shinto" has fallen into the cold shade of Imperial, or at least official, disfavour. If so, may the shade be but a transient one, to be followed by renewed splendour of the ancestral light. National belief is not a thing to be set aside with impunity; and the wronged gods may indeed defer the penalty of neglect, but will surely exact it at the last. "Absit omen."

Buddhism as taught and practised in Japan is too deeply tinged with sacerdotalism not to be injurious; and any European or North-American system or mode of thought would be of yet more pernicious introduction. Exotic growths are apt to turn into poisonous ones in the land of their transplantation. Let us hope for better things: let us trust that the last and latest survivors of the Olympian kinship may not be driven out from their last refuge amid the hills and forests of Japan.

He who would study and understand Japan must yet, in spite of all that has been written about the country, go there in

person, and read not the chapters of French or English, or even of painstaking German authors, but those of Japanese actuality and life. Many and various are these chapters; and not one of them but the attentive reader may derive from its perusal much to instruct and interest; though from none will he learn so much and at so little cost of time and labour as from that of "Kioto," the city of the Mikados, the ex-capital of Japan. Among many cities of high fame, Kioto stands alone in the universality of its memories. Kamakura, the city of Yoritomo and the ill-famed Hojos; Osaka and its Cyclopean citadel, the burial-mounds of Sakai, and the pleasure temples of Enoshima; Nikko, with its stately mausoleums and statelier pinegroves, the mountain-shrines of Minobu, the peerless slopes of Fuji; these, and scores of other spots that might be added to the list, have one and all their spirit-stirring memories and their surviving beauties wherewith to reward the visitor; each one is indeed a picture where a scene, fascinating in itself, is rendered yet more so by the skilful touches of a first-rate artist, till the beholder knows not which most to admire—the subject selected for the painting, or the execution of the painting itself. But Kioto, like some all-comprehending panorama wrought out by a cunning hand, sums up in itself at once the past and the present, the beauty and the decay, the glory, the eclipse, the resurrection, all the changeful history, all the varying thought, all the elaborate art, the whole body and soul of Japan; itself the faithful mirror of the great Empire centred there.

"The living robe of the Deity," to borrow the magnificent metaphor of Goethe's World-Spirit, is woven of many threads, each thread a people, a nation; nor among all these many threads of life is there any of closer texture or stronger fibre than the Japanese. Yet this, too, when carefully examined, will be found to be made up of many subordinate strands, finely intertwined, and at times almost identified, then again differentiated into distinctness; each one a master-idea, a national fact: while, among the rest, two, more marked in their texture, more important than the rest, demand special notice. Oldest in time and strongest in substance is "Shinto," the first and most

vigorous expression of the purely Japanese mind; its formula, the well-known "Kojiki," is even yet to Japan what Homer was to classic, Virgil to mediæval, the Bible to Protestant England, Darwin to the Europe of an hour of our day. Alone and undisputed it swayed Japan for at least a thousand years, till its rival power, Buddhism, entered on the scene some thirteen centuries ago, and while itself strangely modified by the primal Japanese influence, modified in its turn that influence still more. To these two main strands in the Japanese thread a third, best designated by the vague but convenient, because readily understood, phrase, of "European civilisation," has recently been superadded; in what degree, however, and to what result, is still uncertain; for the present it is an ungraceful incongruity, from which we willingly avert our eyes.

And what is "Shinto?" A Chinese compound word, adopted in general use as a curt equivalent of the Japanese "Kami no michi," or "Way of the Deities," the original phrase; it is in what it implies a religious system, which, like religions in general, is made up of two parts, the one mythology, the other precept. The dominant idea on which both these are based is the correlation, if not the absolute identity, of all natural and external forms, man included, with spiritual or divine powers. This idea again is limited, and rendered in a manner definite, by a mythological scheme in which Japan figures as the centre of the entire system, the apex of its perfection, holding thus in "Shinto" both in regard of the country and of its inhabitants much the same position that is occupied by Greece and her islands in the Homeric, or rather the pre-Homeric system of the Achæans and their kindred tribes. Lastly, while the entire Japanese race is assumed to be akin to and intimately connected with the cosmic deities, their direct descendant and representative among men is no other than the reigning Mikado himself. So much for the mythology of "Shinto"; its precepts follow in logical sequence, and are summed up in reverent conformity to the laws of nature, intense patriotism, and obedience to the Mikado.

Such being in its ultimate analysis the "Way of the Deities,"

it is no wonder that its true significance and the influence it has exerted should have proved an enigma, not merely to the shallow bigotry of narrow-minded "missionaries" and their half-educated associates, but even to men of considerable research in Japanese and oriental scholarship, the mental attitude habitual to either class precluding them from seeing in its true perspective the object of their consideration, in which the former sought what they are pleased to call a religion, the latter an elaborate mythos. In the precise sense attached by modern European thought to each of these words, Shinto is neither; it is less in a manner than the former, and more than the latter. The solution of the riddle of the universal, the dogmatic answer to the endless questionings of "Whence?" and "Whither?" an all-mighty, all-creative, all-ruling Deity, a rigid code of moral and religious observances and duties, a conscience of sin, a "thou shalt not" writ up over every door, a future of exceeding great promises and yet greater threats, none of these are its portion; no teacher, divine or otherwise, has summed it up in his person; no author-deity set it forth in a book; no images tenant its shrines, no mediators its heaven, no everlasting burnings its hell. Of all these Shinto has no need. It is by its own showing a mere setting forth of facts, some existent, some handed down by record, but none locally external to this visible universe, and an injunction of obedience to the laws that govern and to the lessons taught by them, the whole having special reference to Japan. These facts are, according to its traditions, the formation and governance of the Japanese island-group by spiritual powers, partly gods and goddesses, of fire, water, earth, air, food, the sun, the moon, and so forth, partly deified heroes or heroines from among the Japanese themselves, and, as a natural consequence, the pre-eminent dignity of the Mikado, who is the lineal descendant of the sun-goddess herself. Beyond this all is but slightly touched on or absolutely ignored by "Shinto" as not to its purpose.

Its direct conclusions or precepts we have already seen; the indirect ones, whether positive or negative, are alike in their

sequence. There is no room in "Shinto" for idols, the gods themselves being ever present in their embodiments or their works, the sun, the moon, the elements, or in the person of the Mikado, and, by communicated right, of his relatives and officials. Nor is there any need of a written revelation where nature herself, "without, within, above us and around," is the ever-open book wherein the will of the gods and the gods themselves are to be read; nor needs there any definite code, preceptive or prohibitory, where man's own nature, maintained in harmony with the nature around him, is man's own all-sufficing law; nor a redeemer or mediator, where everything is divine and right of itself; nor of dogma, where the appeal is not to assertion, but experience, not to theory, but to fact. Shinto temples and Shinto festivals do indeed abound throughout Japan; but the latter are mainly commemorative, the former mere localisations of reverence and of spiritual power; Shinto priests, too, in numbers sufficient, though not excessive, for the temple service, but they vow no celibacy, form no caste apart from a people which is not less akin to the gods than they; no blood-shedding, no sacrifices are needed to reconcile in one those who have never been sundered; only offerings of devotion and respect, emblematic maiden-dances, types of purity imaged to view in white strips of paper dependent from the temple eaves, and a few other symbols of like simplicity in character, which I will describe together with the temples themselves further on. To sum up, "Shinto" is Japanese nature-worship in its most absolute form; patriotism its first duty, the laws of nature and the high deeds of Japanese ancestors its moral code, the Mikado its centre and embodiment, a noble life and admission among the demi-gods its reward. Such is its plan.

More than a thousand years had passed over what may be not unreasonably called historical Japan, when the second strand was added to the thread of national life. This was Buddhism, that mighty influence which had drawn at least half the Turanian world under its sway, and having reduced China, now in the seventh century of our era, invaded Japan. Unfortunately

it came not in its original singleness of purity, but in its gorgeous Chinese travesty of pomp and ceremony, hagiology and legend, formula and spell, attended by a crowd of saints, hermits, monks, angels, demons innumerable, and the whole Hindoo Pantheon in its train. Buddha himself, Amida Butsu for the Japanese, was now, in his true semblance at least, as completely eclipsed by his retinue as ever the Supreme Deity could be by Virgin or Saint in a Calabrian village. But though the central figure of the system had well-nigh disappeared, the central idea of Aryan or Indianized Buddhism, the inherent depravity of man's nature, and his need of supernatural renovation and redemption, remained in full force; nor were its deleterious effects long unmanifested. Weakening at once the self-reliance and self-respect of the Japanese, weakening too their old straightforward trust in the good gods of the nature around them; undermining even their loyalty to his heaven-sent ruler, nay more, that ruler's own belief in his own self, it contributed more than any other cause to the decline of the Mikado's authority, and the consequent anarchy, with its evil but necessary outgrowth of organised feudalism and military despotism, in the end. With the knowledge of sin too came the law of multiplied and onerous precept, a caste priesthood, and a social hierarchy of Indo-Chinese pattern. Yet for two full centuries Shinto, though betrayed and abandoned by Imperial folly, retained its hold on the common people, wiser in their day than their rulers, throughout the greater part of Japan, till Chinese-taught craft invented that strange compromise by which Shinto itself appeared to blend with and merge in Buddhism; and the two systems thus confused gave birth to a monstrous compound that retained whatever was childish or injurious of each, omitted whatever was reasonable and beneficial. Fortunate it may truly be said to have been for Japan when the bitter bigotry of the priest Nichiren in the thirteenth century violently dissolved the unholy alliance, and the inherent antagonism of priesthood and caste to patriotism and nature stood revealed beyond all possibility of future compromise or reconciliation. And in very truth Buddhism as received in Japan never was and never could be

otherwise than antagonistic to Shinto, always in principle, often in fact. But trees are best known by their fruits, and the most perspicuous commentary on the two rivals who yet dispute the religious and, to a certain degree, the political allegiance of Japan, is to be read in the city and the palace, the castle and the temples of Kioto. Let us study it there.

The versifier—who he was I know not, but he must have been a poor creature to my thinking—who after comparing the world to an inn, proceeds to say—

> "Many I hear, and some I see,
> I naught to them, they naught to me,"

can hardly have numbered a Japanese inn among his travelling experiences. The provident care of the worthy Governor of Kioto has installed myself and my companion, a young English-speaking Japanese official of the "Gaimusho," or Foreign Office, in a comfortable hostelry, where we occupy a suite of small rooms, opening the one into the other by the ordinary sliding-screens, and looking out through an open verandah across the clear rapid waters of the Kumo-Gawa torrent where it traverses this quarter of the town. But we are by no means solitary; some three or four Japanese wayfarers, guests in the same inn and lodged in the neighbouring apartments, have already at this early hour, after the country custom, begged and obtained the honour, as they elect to term it, of wishing us a good morning. Seated together we enjoy the view of gardens and temples clustering half-way up the slopes of the wood-clad hills that separate between the Kioto valley and Lake Biwa famed in song, and help each other by turns to diminutive cups of that most refreshing of all drinks ever invented by man, fresh Japanese tea. Next a visitor of quality is announced; and the Governor's chief secretary presents himself at the opening of the screen; and after much exchange of ceremonious courtesy on either side, befitting the gentry or "Samurai" class to which he, in common with most of his rank, belongs, takes a place in our little circle squatted round the tea-things, and offers his services on the Governor's behalf as guide to the sights of Kioto. For

five days he will be our constant attendant, and will leave nothing unsuggested or undone that can contribute to our personal comfort and to the ends of our journey. And here let me remark once for all, that though the prescriptions of Japanese etiquette are many, and even onerous at times, it is not in these formalities that the much talked-of Japanese courtesy essentially consists, but in the modest self-restraint of demeanour, the promptness to oblige, the unsleeping care to avoid whatever might by any possibility annoy or offend, and the peculiar gentleness of tone and manner which render the Japanese, whatever his rank or position in society may be, so truly a model "gentle" man, in the proper and authentic sense of the word. No less completely is the Japanese woman, high or low, lady or serving-maid, a gentle woman even after the exacting Petruchio's own heart. But to continue.

Quaint little folding maps, such as abound for sale in every Japanese town, have been produced for inspection, and Kioto and its environs carefully studied, till the plan of our daily campaign having been accurately determined, we descend, escorted *honoris causa* by the landlord and an indefinite number of followers, mostly housemaids, to the street door. Here six sturdy fellows are in waiting to pull, two apiece, our "jin-riki-shas," vehicles of recent introduction, but now universal throughout Japan, and which, for the benefit of those who have not seen or sat in them, may be described as exaggerated perambulators of the hansom-cab type with shafts, and drawn for short distances by one, for longer by two, and occasionally three men, tandem-yoked, at a pace averaging, and not rarely exceeding, five or six miles an hour.

Of all their surface qualities—I use the word "surface" not as excluding the underlying "substance," but rather implying it—none is more noteworthy among the Japanese than their cheerfulness at work. It is a quality shared by all classes, and common to all employments. The Japanese statesman dictates a dispatch or discusses a cabinet question with a smile on his face; the financier, more astonishing yet, smiles over the intricacies of a deficient budget; the preacher smiles during

every pause in his sermon; the writer at his desk; the shopkeeper smiles while chaffering with his customer, the servant on receiving his master's orders, the smith while forging the metal, the potter manipulating the clay, the husbandman as he wades knee-deep in mud across the rice-fields, the bargeman propelling his clumsy boat against wind and tide, the coolie straining to lift the heaviest load, nay, even the convict at his forced labour by the roadside. And what is more, a very slight occasion will broaden the smile into a hearty laugh. All this is true and genuine good humour, based firstly, no doubt, on a good digestion, but also on a remarkably elastic temperament, great courage, and the sound good sense that everywhere and everyhow makes the best of things. Had Mark Tapley been, what his creator's imagination never compassed, somewhat more of a gentleman in manners, he might have passed for an average Japanese.

In the qualities just touched on, as in whatever else pertains to Japanese gentility and refinement, the inhabitants of Kioto are, on all hands, allowed to excel. Of the town itself, through the long, wide, straight, well-paved streets of which we are now passing at such a pace as the busy marketing crowd of morning permits, neatness, cleanliness, and what may, by a slight abuse of terms, be called "quietness" in architectural style and decoration, are the chief features. What between the great breadth of the roadways, and the unwillingness of the Japanese to allow their earthquake-shaken houses more than one story over the ground-floor, nor always that, the extent of a city which even now, however shrunken from its old grandeur, numbers a quarter of a million of inhabitants, is sufficiently great; and we have at least two miles of street to traverse before we reach our first destination, the Mikado's Palace. The centre of the town is almost exclusively devoted to shops, warehouses, tea-houses, inns, and the like; public buildings and institutions, together with the private houses of the nobility and the upper classes, are more frequent in the outer quarters; while most of the temples, Shinto or Buddhist, famed as the chiefest adornment of Kioto, are placed on the outskirts of the houses, beside the

many tree-margined embranchments of the swift Kamo-Gawa, or on the green slopes of the hills that encircle this loveliest of plains.

Familiar by hearsay, or by the specimens which may now be seen in abundance everywhere, with Japanese art, and aware that Kioto is pre-eminently the artistic city of Japan, the visitor cannot but wonder, as he traverses the business quarters of the mid-town, at the want of display of any kind. In size and style one shop-front much resembles another, and except the quaint Japanese or occasionally Chinese characters fantastically inscribed on the lintel or door-posts, there is little to proclaim the nature of the wares within. These treasures, embroidery, porcelain, lacquer-work, enamel, metallurgy, painting, than which none choicer are to be found throughout the island Empire, are stowed away for the most part in the unostentatious background of small apartments. Coleridge's devil "did grin" when he passed a genteel cottage, knowing its apparent humility to be merely the aping of pride. But then the devil was in Scotland; had his morning walk been through Kioto his grin would have missed its meaning; for vain as the Japanese may be, with or without cause needs not to discuss at present, of his nationality—no man in the world is freer from individual vanity, none more averse from showing off and pretentiousness, which indeed he would look upon as that worst of all offences stigmatised by the Japanese code, a breach of good manners. To say that the snob is wholly absent from among the social fauna of Japan would be perhaps, human nature considered, an over-bold assertion, but certainly the specimens of that kind are very rare.

Issuing at last from these the most crowded and busiest quarters of the town, from the almost democratic equality of shops and houses, tea-rooms, bath-rooms, refreshment-rooms, and the rest, we enter on a quieter region, interspersed with gardens, the entrance-gates of private residences, or public offices, till we come on a long, low whitewashed wall of brick and plaster, topped by a plain tile coping, one side of a parallelogram which encloses in its circuit a space of about thirty acres. Within

these walls, on this spot of enclosed ground, dwelt for one thousand and seventy-five years of uninterrupted succession, the Mikado, Emperor of Japan, direct descendant of the Sun goddess, high priest, or rather himself the ever-present pattern and deity of Shinto, absolute lord and ruler, unquestioning obedience to whose every will is the first duty of every one, male or female, high or low, great or small, of the three-and-thirty million inhabitants of Japan. What evidences of despotic power, what caprices of despotic fancy, what traces of despotic cruelty, what treasures of despotic greed, what extravagances of despotic luxury may we not expect to find within these walls?

Leaving our vehicles at the unadorned outer gate, but accompanied by the men who have been dragging them, we give our names as visitors to the writer or clerk at the old porter's lodge, where not a soldier, not a policemen even keeps guard, and enter the spacious courtyard, where full in front stands the palace. And what do we see? A one-storied assemblage of small apartments, exactly similar to those of any ordinary Japanese dwelling, only somewhat more extensive, united by long, low, open corridors, the walls composed of unpainted timber, with the usual sliding screens of paper and bamboo for doors and windows, the pillars plain, unadorned, unpainted though polished timber; the projecting roof, part tile, part thatch. Within we walk over simple wooden floors of pine, laid down with the identical close-woven mats, scrupulously clean like everything else, but otherwise neither better nor worse than those of a private house; the ceiling above is plain as the rest, and as neat. One, and one only, apartment is there to betoken state; a kind of public hall, or rather open shed, on smooth wood pillars, over-roofed with wood; a simple raised seat with the portraits of the Emperor and Empress above indicates that the place does duty for an audience-hall. The sliding screens which separate the hall from the passage behind are figured with the supposed portraits of Chinese sages; the front is open to a garden walk. Neither here, nor anywhere else throughout the palace, is any ornament displayed except it be the paintings, many of them by the best Japanese artists, and representing chiefly landscape scenes, birds,

flowers, studies of trees, and the like, which diversify the wall-slides between one room and another; nor, mats excepted, have the little closet-like rooms themselves any furniture or decoration beyond an occasional piece of quaint bronze-work, or some carved utensil for tea-making or food. A small, ungilt, unpainted, imageless Shinto shrine denotes the Mikado's personal form of worship; while within a closet, shut off by heavy lacquered screens from the adjoining apartment, is said to be the original stone of sovereignty, round and polished, bestowed by the Sun goddess Ama-terasu on her descendants, together with a copy of the sword, conjoint symbol of rule, and also divinely given; the sword itself is preserved at the still more ancient shrine of the mythical Yamato-Daké, queller of the barbarous aborigines of Eastern Japan. Nor is the heaven-sent mirror, chief emblem of the Mikado's great ancestress, within these walls, but at the sacred temple in the adjoining province of Tse; the Mikado contenting himself with a copy, now deposited in the little Shinto shrine mentioned before. But to none of these objects, nor even to the private apartments and sleeping room of the Mikado himself, is the approach in any way guarded other than by the customary sliding screens; no preparation for defence, indeed no possibility of it exists anywhere within the palace, not even privacy sufficient to ordinary European requirements; no vestige of luxury, none even of any but the most moderate expenditure, but simplicity everywhere; such is the Imperial abode. The very garden amid which it stands, though laid out with the best of that horticultural art in which Japan has no rival, is equally unpretentious, quiet, almost homely; no wide walks, no stately avenues, no giant fountains, no statues, no arches, no balustraded terraces, no calculated approaches, no regal vistas; such a garden as might be the recreation ground of a well-to-do gentleman, or quiet-loving author or poet; barely a Twickenham, much less a Pembroke Lodge; in nothing a Belvedere or a Versailles.

And these are the authentic head-quarters of the most ancient dynasty that yet lives and reigns on earth's surface amid the ruins of so many sceptres, so many thrones; this is the palace,

this the residence of the most absolute autocrat who ever claimed not merely the "right divine of kings to govern wrong," but almost divinity itself; this the dwelling, the shrine of the goddess-descended demi-god, the heir of the war spirit Jimmo-Tenno, of the civiliser and organiser Sujin, of the heroic Jingu-Kojo, victress of Corea, of the heaven-ascended Yamato-Daké, of the people's father Nintoku-Tenno, of three thousand years of worshipped sovereignty; this building, not distinguished in type, scarce distinguished in size and details from a private house; these quiet groves, this unguarded enclosure! And rightly is it thus. Here, as in the sacred mirror itself, we see the inmost nature of the Mikado's sway, the true position of the sun-born Emperor amid his kindred people. Secure in his own congenital and inherent right, raised above all around him by dignity of nature and birth, a demi-god among men, he owns no need of the two props that most uphold the tottering weakness of artificial rulers, the iron and the gold, military strength and pompous display. Such accessories would not set off, they could only obscure the purity of his glory, as clouds the sun; more yet, the living head of a religion that teaches by existent fact, not by written precept, of a system according to which man is a law to himself, and nature's own simplicity the standard measure of the highest great and good, he is in his own self the embodiment, the supreme illustration, the perfection of that simplicity, of that law, he the archetypal fact of Shinto, the personification of the god-governed Empire. And such, as no uncertain history tells, were the Emperors of Japan for nigh two thousand years, till the "thick, sweet, stupefying incense smoke" of a corrupt Buddhism, and the fatal caste-avatar of Southern Asia, overshadowed the clear heavens of Shinto. Let the foremost living Japanese scholar, the most accurate critic, Ernest Satow, tell the tale,—it is one among many such,—of Nintoku-Tenno, Mikado in the third century, contemporary of the European despot Constantine, of the Asiatic tyrant Sapor. "The Mikado, having climbed a hill, looked all around, and observing the absence of smoke from the cottages of the people, decreed that for the space of three years no taxes or forced

labour should be imposed on his subjects. His own palace, for want of funds to repair it, was allowed to become so dilapidated that the roof admitted the rain. Three years later he again ascended the hill, and beheld smoke arising from every dwelling. The people were now rich enough to bear taxation without feeling the burden, and voluntarily offered to contribute towards the rebuilding of the palace." Legendary in form the story may be, but it is history in fact; nor unaptly illustrated by him who so lately on the removal of the seat of Empire from Kioto to Tokio, refused to have a palace of his own erected to him in his new capital, till such time as the finances of the Empire might be able easily and without prejudice to other national interests to bear the outlay. May that time soon come! Meantime the Emperor, inheritor and restorer of the secular throne, Mutsu-Hito, true Mikado, and worthy descendant of worthy ancestors, inhabits not a palace but a private dwelling, not the less honoured, but more, for his faithful adherence to the principles of Shinto and Japan.

To these very principles, as the learned Japanese scholar Motoori, the most authentic exponent of Shinto in the last century, informs us, was due the ready access and the familiarity of daily intercourse allowed by the Mikados in their earlier and better days to their subjects at large, when the Japanese Emperors were not only among their people but of them, their leaders and fellow-soldiers in war, their instructors and fellow-workmen in the arts of peace; hence the absence of all vain parade, all idle pomp, splendour, and luxury in their personal and immediate surroundings; they exemplified in themselves the simple conformity to nature in which consists the highest Japanese perfection; fitting models, rulers, high priests, gods of the nation to which they belonged, and of which they were the head by right, alike natural and divine, the existent unchallenged fact of birth.

Nor less truly with the unerring instinct of genius does Motoori ascribe the eclipse, and, for nigh ten centuries, the practical obliteration of the Mikado's rule, to the violation of these very prescriptions of Shinto, to their supersession by

Asiatic court ceremony and cumbrous pomp, to luxury and artificialism, to seclusion, partly voluntary, partly enforced, and separation from the people; in a word to the Chino-Buddhist system and caste-government that for an entire millennium brooded, as clouds do over a cholera-stricken land, over the length and breadth of Japan; while the immurement, ceremonial in form, compulsory in fact, of the true Sovereign of Nipon had, under the heavy shadow of the Toku-gawa usurpation, become so absolute, that the very existence of the Sun-descended was, for the majority of his own subjects, a matter of speculation, of scepticism even. And hence the first remedy that the great patriot writer had to suggest for the evils of the times was to urge that the Mikado should once more re-appear, a Japanese among Japanese, in personal and daily contact with his subjects, living amidst them and after their fashion, as in the times of old.

Nothing could to all appearance have been further from realisation than this advice, wise and well-grounded as it was, when given in the days of the too-powerful Bakufu and the family of Kii. But in Japan, as elsewhere, the whirligig of time brought in its revenges; and the history of 1868 and the succeeding years has amply proved and illustrated the soundness of Motoori's counsel. There in the Palace of Kioto itself, though no longer honoured by the actual presence of Japanese majesty, I see a curious exemplification of the recent change, or rather of reversion to the ancient and normal condition of things, in the numerous groups of Japanese, most of them, as their dress indicates, belonging to the middle, not a few to the lower classes, whom I meet strolling about in respectful curiosity through the rooms and corridors of the Imperial dwelling. The entrance of the Mikado's historical palace, whence the jealous tyranny of the Shoguns so long excluded all visits, except their own, is now practically open to all the Mikado's subjects alike, whatever their condition, and the eagerness with which they avail themselves of the permission bears witness no less than their orderly and subdued demeanour to the loyalty of their devotion. Well grounded in national self-respect, there is no fear lest a Japanese crowd, though made up of roughs and street-arabs, or rather of

those who by prescription would be such, were they natives of Western Europe or the United States, should for a moment forget in word, deed, or even gesture, what is due to the nation and the nation's sovereign, lest "princely privilege" should be compromised by "vile participation," or familiarity lapse into contempt. How far the same may hold good where others than Japanese are concerned might not be so easy to determine; and I myself personally incline to think that the extreme limit of condescension has been already reached, if not overpassed in that direction. European race-stands, circus performances, the decks of foreign frigates, and the like are, to say the least, questionable places for the presence of the Mikado of Dai-Nihon, the heir of Jimmo-Tenno, the descendant of Ama-terasu, goddess of the sun. Among his own kinsman-subjects the case is widely different, the precedent honourable and safe.

Such is the writing and such the reading of it on the walls of the Kioto Palace. But the more fully to apprehend its meaning, let us pay a brief visit to the favourite recreation grounds of the Japanese Emperor without the city circuit. So, turning to the right, we cross the pebbly bed of the Kamo-gawa where it flows not far from the palace limits, and traverse a level half mile or more of gardens, fields, and little peasant cottages, till at the base of the pine-clad hills that border to the east the plain of Kioto, we reach a very unpretentious garden wall and an unornamented gate. Here we give in our names to the old door-keeper, and without further preliminary are admitted—as indeed is any person of respectable appearance, and some, if European toilette ideas be taken as standard, of very disrespectable—to the pleasure grounds of Shu-gaku, the resort by preference of the later Mikados when tired, as they often must have been, of their half-seclusion, half-imprisonment in their city abode. Terrace above terrace the grassy slopes run up the hill-side, traversed by narrow serpentine walks, and dotted here and there by little thatched garden houses, wood and bamboo, where the Mikado and his attendants might take tea, and enjoy the different points of view across this Japanese Val d'Arno with its Eastern Florence lighted up, tower and

temple, castle and palace, by the morning sun. Cherry-trees and maples, the former delighting the Japanese eye by the delicate tints of their abundant flowers in the spring-time (when, indeed, it was my good fortune to visit Shu-gaku), the latter by the gorgeous crimson of the unfolding leaves, are thick planted everywhere, but mostly in avenues by the winding margin of an artificial lake, where miniature bridges and rock-work islands give somewhat of a Chinese character to the scene. On the highest ledge of the garden grounds a wooden pavilion, plain and unadorned like the other constructions here, has been skilfully placed so as to command through an opening between the giant pine trunks a complete bird's-eye view of the city and plain of Kioto, girt in with its wooded amphitheatre of hills, except where it opens southward far away to the level lands of Osaka and the distant sea coast. So lovely, so ideally perfect is the view that a slight sketch of it, made by myself on the spot, was eagerly begged for by a Kioto artist to serve as a model for design on screen or lacquer. The day is fine, an Italian spring morning, and holiday-makers, shopmen apparently, artisans, day-labourers, and country-folk are strolling about at leisure through the imperial enclosures, admiring the flowers, gazing on the lovely prospect, or grouped by the water's edge feeding certain huge golden carp, favoured pets of the Japanese populace, with rice pellets purchased at a booth close by. Others are respectfully bowing their heads before an imageless shrine bosomed among the shrubs, and commemorative of some Japanese demi-god of the Mikado's family. Gardens, walks, ponds, temples, pavilions, all are such for size and style as might be owned by any quiet-loving gentleman-proprietor of orderly habits and good taste; anything less royal, less imperial, in the vulgar Asiatic or, only too frequently, European sense of the word, it would be difficult to imagine. The recreation grounds of the "people's Emperor," for such the Mikado truly is, are as characteristically simple, as devoid of adventitious parade and circumstance, as are the official headquarters, the palace itself.

But if content to pass the days of his mortal sojourn after

this homely and, to use the stereotyped phrase, patriarchal fashion, the Shinto demi-god will surely at least, when departing to take his place among his deified ancestors, the tutelary Powers of Japan, leave to earth as memorial of his reign some gorgeous monument, some starry pointing pyramid, some pillared mausoleum, some giant wonder of labour and art in long enduring witness of his greatness and virtues. Lesser rulers by far than the Mikado of Japan do and have done so; and here in Dai-Nihon itself the tombs of the Shoguns, mere military chiefs of usurped authority, and they themselves not sovereigns, but subjects by title, have made famous the burial-grounds of Nikko, of Shiba, and Nyeno with some of the choicest, if not, indeed, the very choicest marvels of architecture and skill. Not so the lords of the Shoguns. At the town of Nara, capital of the Yamato province, about thirty miles to the south of Kioto, and in its vicinity, is the favourite resting-place of the Emperors; let us visit them there. Unfrequented by the sight-seeing tourist, some of them, indeed, almost unknown to his research, their graves are for the most part amid the fields, under the forest trees of the wide land; but of one, the great ruler, Kai-kwa Tenuo, fourth of the sun-descended line, and numbered among the demi-gods more than two thousand years ago, the tomb is yet to be seen just outside the town gates of Nara; and now, leaving the street lines behind us, we stand before it. An uncarved gateway of smooth, unpainted timber, a small gravel-strewn space, wherein to offer up commemorative prayer, two tall lanterns of hewn but undecorated stone on either side, and beyond these a little earth-mound, thickly planted round with bamboo for screen, and on its summit a lofty pine-tree, overshadowing a single upright cube of uncarved, uninscribed, unornamented stone; no other memorial is there, no other needed. *Si monumentum requiris, circumspice;* the heaven and the earth of Japan are the monument of the Mikado.

We have seen Shinto in its imperial and political, let us now see it in its more strictly religious aspect; and from among the many shrines of Kioto let us select for our purpose that of

"Inari no Yashiro," on the eastern hill slopes that adjoin the town. "This popular Shinto temple," as we are informed by Mr. E. Satow in his excellent handbook, "the prototype of the thousand of Inari temples scattered all over the country, was founded in A.D. 711, when the Goddess of Food is said to have first manifested herself on the hill behind. The first temple consisted of three small chapels on the three peaks of the hill, whence the worship of the goddess and her companion deities was removed to its present site in 1246." These two associated deities are, by Mr. Satow's account, Omiyanome, a personification of the Mikado's palace, and another courtly god who met Ninigi no mikoto, the grandson of the Sun goddess, when descending from heaven with the emblematic regalia, the mirror, the sword, and the stone, to inaugurate the imperial dynasty at Japan. To this divine trio, the Harvest god, who here revealed himself in the locally appropriate form of a crane carrying a grain of rice in his bill, and another deity, Oyashima no kami by name, in whom all the islands of Japan are collectively personified, have for five hundred years past been added. The existing structure, a wooden one, like all Shinto and most Buddhist temples in Japan, is about sixty years old; for except where fortresses are concerned, stone is rarely used as constructive material in this earthquake-shaken country. Such is the history in brief of Inari no Yashiro, or the "Temple of the Rice-bearer," whither, returning townwards from the Imperial Gardens, we now direct our way.

Running as though their very lives depended on it, and exchanging words of banter with each other and with those they meet on the road, our "jin-riki-sha" men have cleared the long wooden bridge across the straggling river-bed, and traversed about two miles of suburb; the streets are not less broad and straight than those in the town itself, but the houses are lower and poorer looking, the shops, among which I remark an extraordinary proportion of toy-stalls, indicating the neighbourhood of a temple (for to purchase something wherewithal to amuse his children seems to be an essential part of every Japanese father's piety), are small, and the people who throng the way

poorly clad,—many indeed, after the hardy Japanese fashion that so vividly recalls memories of old Greece, are nearly naked. Yet for all this there is no dirt, no squalor, no gloom, no hint of discomfort or discontent. At last we arrive opposite to a tree-flanked opening between the shops on the left-hand side of the road, and a wide path spanned by a colossal "torii" leading upward to the temple grounds beyond.

A "torii" is a structure composed of a large cylindrical cross beam, placed athwart two rounded wooden pillars slightly inclined inwards, with its ends projecting beyond them; a similar but smaller piece of wood, parallel with the upper one, unites the side-posts not far below the top cross-work. Originally these "torii" were always of uncarved wood, though carefully smoothed, unpainted, and without any metal joinings; but in later times, when the simplicity of Shinto had been corrupted by Chino-Buddhist innovation, they were frequently made of stone, and even of brass; their dimensions vary from those of an ordinary gateway for foot-passengers to thirty feet in height, with proportional width. No Shinto temple is without one, and they have often many "torii" in front; their purpose being, it is said, but whether rightly I know not, to serve as perches for the birds which tenant the sacred enclosure; for myself I never once saw a bird of any description, not even a crow, make such use of them. Groups of little "torii" painted red, are often to be found arranged consecutively in avenues leading up to some retired Shinto shrine among the trees; indeed an idea of sacredness seems to attach itself to the form, though rather as a matter of sentiment than precisely of worship.

Leaving our "jin-riki-shas" outside, we pass on foot under the entrance "torii" and walk up a gently sloping pathway, broad and clean swept, among the magnificent Japanese pines—"cryptomeria" the learned call them—that are invariably planted round every Shinto shrine, be it small or great. Soon we reach the foot of a lofty flight of stone steps, also well kept and clean swept; at the top of these a second "torii" admits us in due course on to a grand plateau, where we are fronted by a

spacious raised wooden shed, open on all sides, roofed with thatch—your only Shinto wear for roofage—and adorned, if adornment it can be called, by a bulky straw rope wound about the pillars, and by notched slips of white paper, pendent and fluttering from the eaves. There on high days and holidays is held the "Kagura" dance, an ancient choragic performance, executed by two or more virgins, who, crowned with flowers and waving paper-festooned wands in their hands, like modest (if the adjective be not incongruous) columbines in a ballet, move in slow time alone the stage, or weave mazy measures around each other in mystic convolutions; how far, with reference to planetary cycles and epicycles, the investigators of myths, solar or stellar, may decide. Enough for the present that the dance is alike decorous and pretty. Beyond this shed are two temples, each dedicated by the same quinary of deities; the foremost one, on a level with the "Kagura" stage, being the less characteristic, we will pass it by in favour of the other shrine, placed rather higher up, and which shall be described in due course. On either side of the temple front are two stone foxes, the special emblems of the "Inari," seated aloft, each on a high pedestal, sacred but unworshipped symbols, peculiar to the presiding deity of the place. More ordinary guardians of the shrine are two great stone dogs, of fanciful and rather leonine cut; in strict Shinto practice these, like everything else belonging to the temple, should be unpainted; in the instances before us, however, the license of blue and green colouring has been admitted. One of these Lombardic-looking monsters, which does duty for a male, has its mouth open, the other, supposed to be a female, has hers close shut; a manifest anomaly, and intended, I suppose, to indicate what should be, rather than what is, in the ordinary course of nature. An ex-voto shed, and another wherein are kept certain sacred cars used in yearly processions, flank the temple. All about, sometimes ranged in lines plantation-like, sometimes grouped in clusters, stand innumerable stone lamps, offerings of the devout, each raised on a neat stone pillar varying from five to eight or ten feet in height; the four-sided opening of the lantern is occasionally

fashioned into a circle on the one side and a crescent on the other, doubtless to denote the sun and the moon; I have also observed, but much more rarely, a star-like aperture. It may be worth notice, because a characteristic circumstance, that Shinto, as befits a teaching concerned exclusively with the powers and influence that act on the human, and more particularly the Japanese race, takes but little account of the stars, perhaps because too distant for the cognisance of such a system. Outside the temple, but close to it, are a few thatched sheds. In one of them sits a priest in ordinary secular dress; near him are several neat little piles of very inartistic views of the place, where everything is explained, at good need, by Japanese superscriptions written all about the sketch, which is printed on the thinnest of paper, and a heap of tiny scrolls, whereon the names of the temple and of the guardian deity are inscribed; these he sells for a microscopic sum to whoever wills, as remembrances of the place, and at the same time as titles to a continuance of the divine favour. For Japanese devotion, not in Shinto merely, but under whatever other form it may assume, is nothing if not local. In another shed refreshments, mostly sweets, are to be purchased, and more quaint ex-voto pictures, contemptuous of perspective, and commemorative of wondrous deliverances from sickness or danger, are hung up; but within the temple nothing of all this is permitted.

What, then, does the shrine itself contain? What is it that these crowds of worshippers, many of them pilgrims from a considerable distance, have come to visit? Strictly, nay literally, the Invisible. We have mounted a few more stone steps, and are now before the sanctuary of the Five. It is a small wooden, thatch-covered building; the floor within is raised, and fully open to view, but its actual access is barred by a low railing and gate in front of the inner flight of stairs. Once a year, or more often if circumstances demand, this gate is opened to all. Shreds of white paper in alternate notches and wisps of clean straw fringe the eaves; a straw rope, so placed as when shaken to sound a gong, hangs down from the lintel over the entrance. The apartment—for it has no other appearance—within is laid

down with the customary spotless white matting of a Japanese interior; two or three small square cushions lie about for the priests to sit on during service-time; two or three wooden wands —"gohei" is their proper designation—bearing at one extremity pendants of notched paper, commonly white, but sometimes distinguished with green, blue, yellow, and red, are placed on the floor close by; on one side a small gong is suspended in a lacquered framework. At the farther end of the room is a kind of altar, or cupboard, rather plain, unpainted wood like the rest; and on this are sometimes, but by no means invariably, placed two small sprigs of the "Sakaki" tree, a kind of cypress, known, I believe, to botanists by the name of "Cleyera Japonica," and held appropriate to divine worship as a symbol of purity; the tree itself is somewhat rare, and thence it may be esteemed the more. Between these, on a simple wooden stand, is often to be seen a circular metal mirror, of a foot or more in diameter, an important, indeed, the most important, emblem of Shinto, but the extra significance of which is matter of controversy; the back of the mirror is not rarely covered by a map, in metal relief, of some one or other Japanese province. Such a mirror is, I am told, kept in every Shinto temple, but is by no means always exposed to view. Two, three, or more "gohei" wands are also laid on the shelf at the top. Within the hollow of the altar-cupboard—which is, however, at no time opened to the public, very rarely even to sacerdotal inspection—are the objects, whatever they may be, in which the sacredness of the entire place is supposed to be incorporated and centred. But as none but the priests, nor they even except on the most solemn occasions, ever so much as pretend to see them, their nature, not to say their very existence, is uncertain; nor according to pure and unadulterated Shinto theory, is it by any means essential to worship. This is all; and the holiest Shinto shrine in all Japan, those of Tse itself not excepted, has nothing more to show.

Nor are the rites of Shinto worship less unpretentious than the temples where they are celebrated. One, two, or three priests in long white or slightly flowered robes, with square black biretta-like caps of thin gauze on their heads, each

morning take their place on the cushions in front of the altar, and there, wand in hand, recite a few formulas of prayer, accompanied by an occasional note of the gong, after which they worship, bowing their heads, and disrobe themselves. Sometimes, though not often, a "Kagura" dance is performed, the priests taking on themselves the musical accompaniment, if "musical" be not a misnomer where a European ear could detect nothing in the least worthy of that adjective. Meanwhile the laity stand outside the paling; each man having first performed the slight ablutions required by the ritual, rubs his hands together—an act of respect due to a superior presence—bows his head, strikes with the knotted straw rope twice or thrice on the gong suspended above, casts some trifling offering into a large open chest before the temple entrance, and puts up, most often in silence, a short extempore prayer for whatever may happen to be the object of his desires; after which, bowing again, he steps aside to purchase a written amulet-paper, such as I have described already; or loiters awhile beneath the shade of the sacred grove, as though to bring himself more completely under the influence of the local deity; or, if so disposed, retires from the precincts altogether. Nor, even if he should be, as often happens, a pilgrim from the farthest corner of Japan, and have measured many hundred miles from his home to the shrine, is any other act or form of devotion incumbent on him, nor does he, secure in the efficacy of his once proffered petition, twice repeat the rite. Whatever may be true of other heathens (or Christians either, for the nonce), these certainly do not think to be heard by their much speaking.

We, too, will now quit the principal shrine, and stroll at leisure among the many lesser temples jotted over the sacred enclosure, which extends for about half a mile square in every direction from the road-level up to the mountain-tops, a thousand feet high or thereabouts, overlooking the plain of Kioto. Footpaths, ingeniously and solidly constructed, and kept with a neatness that might do honour to an English gentleman's park, wind to right and left among the trees, connecting with each other the various spots which popular tradition delights to point

out, and popular devotion to honour. Of these the most ancient are the three chapels already mentioned on the hill summit; but many others, of great though not equal antiquity, have perched themselves on the steep slopes, some shyly embosomed in narrow dells by the side of cool fountains, while others have taken up more conspicuous positions, whence through tree and shrub they overlook the plain and the river; but no one without its own peculiar beauty of site. On all sides violets stud the tufted grass, great azalea clusters of scented pink burn like stray bonfires among the jutting rocks; far in heaven overhead arches the enlaced canopy of twisted pine branches; little rivulets, crystal pure, come tumbling down from the heights; and cool breezes, light and life-giving as those of the Tuscan Apennines, rustle through the wood, and temper the heat of sunny May, else almost excessive in this southerly clime. Sometimes, according as the fancy of Inari's worshippers may have willed it so, we pass under whole avenues of red-painted wooden "torii," thick placed side by side; then, turning a path corner, we suddenly find ourselves in presence of a neatly kept oratory, with a priest in his little hut on guard close by. After many windings among the ravines, and meeting or passing many a merry band of laughing pilgrims—for the Japanese look on a visit to their gods much as they would on one to their yet flesh-invested friends, and are equally of a mind for fun in either case—we stand on a commanding height by the shrine of Kami no Jinga, "the Oku no In, or Holy of Holies," says Mr. Satow, "where a huge boulder marks the spot where the goddess made her first appearance in the year 711." The boulder itself, a mass of volcanic tufa, forms the apex of the hill; it is protected by a neat stone paling, and further honoured by a straw rope wound about it, and a liberal allowance of notched paper streamers, all white; while the special personality of the goddess who first selected it is announced by two stone foxes keeping guard on either side of the smooth wooden "torii" at the entrance. Two stone lanterns also flank the shrine, and a white banner flutters over it and guides visitors to the spot. Close by a bamboo framework, shaped like a screen, and divided by several cross-

lines, bears suspended from it long rows of paper tickets, each inscribed with the name of a worshipper; memoranda left with the deity to keep the petitions offered fresh in her mind. Besides this, which may appropriately be called the visiting-book of the goddess, an infinity of thin wooden slips, pointed at the lower end, are stuck into the ground near the shrine, alongside the path leading to it, and indeed everywhere all over the hillside, with shreds of writing attached to them, denoting the names of the deity whose good-will has been sought, and of the petitioner himself; their frequency combines, with the extreme neatness of the grounds, to give the entire enclosure somewhat of the appearance of a carefully-kept botanical garden on a large scale, with the names of the plants on tickets. How many anxious petitions are here recorded, how many answered, how many frustrate of reply; what a tale of fears and hopes, of desires, of sorrows, of expectation, of disappointment, of gratitude, of life, of death, is registered here!

Many, far too many, writers about Japan, either from want of observation, or incapability to understand what they observed, have repeated parrot-like, one after another, the phrase, that "Shinto has no hold on the Japanese mind." So far as I can judge, the crowds that daily worship at these temples, the countless petitions offered up there, the numerous monthly or yearly recurring pilgrimages, the local memorials purchased and treasured up in almost every house of Japan, appear to tell a very different tale. "But the Japanese do not look as if they took their religion in earnest," says some Western traveller, as he or she, standing by, watches with half-amused contempt the men and women of the land approach the open shrine amid talk and laughter, and after one or two inclinations of the head, rubbings of the hands, and a composed silence of a couple of minutes at the most, turn away to resume their scarce interrupted conversation and jest, with no trace of seriousness in manner or countenance to indicate where they have been, or what they have done. Can, then, a religion exert much influence over its followers, that claims of them and receives no more outward observance than this?

Precisely so, and in that very meagreness of outward ritual and observance is found the best proof that Shinto is even now as of old a living power in Japan. Where a belief is so thoroughly incorporated into the nature of those who hold it as to be identified with that nature itself, but little is needed of set form or countenance, of studied preparation or prolonged rite. All these things are, rightly understood, mere appliances for the make-believe, or at best "with much pain attain to half-believe," of those to whose inner heart the belief is external; the props and adjuncts of a confessedly feeble faith; the artificial appliances to bring about that which of itself would not be. This test, applicable in its measure to every creed, is to none more applicable than to Shinto, which, it should be borne in mind, is in its ultimate expression nothing but the worship of existent nature, and is then best exemplified when nature herself at her best is best expressed. Simple ideas require but simple symbols; that which is natural asks not much help from the artificial; plain wood, white paper, straw bands, these and their like are enough where the creed is not so much written on the heart as it is the heart itself. Few and simple indeed were the symbols of Christianity in the days of its strength; the birth and growth of Christian decoration and art has kept steady pace with the decline of Christian belief as a living power among Western nations. Nor does the history of Islam, though in a field widely apart, teach a different lesson.

For the results of Shinto we need only look on Japan herself; and on the wonderfully high degree of true civilisation, that is of honour, of courage, of social self-respect, of regard for others, of reverence for authority, age, and learning, of delicate artistic sense and practice, of subordination, of organised government, of courtesy, of cleanliness, of industry, that she has in long ages, guiltless of Europe and all its works, developed for herself and out of herself; look also on the ready flexibility with which she takes up from other nations whatever may profit her, not crudely, not unintelligently, but modifying, altering, improving, to suit her own circumstances and requirements. And this civilisation of her own, not indeed the civilisation of railroads

and machines, nor that of speculators and stock-exchanges, nor that even of capitalists and paupers, of luxurious ostentation at one end of the scale, and brutalising degradation at the other, but the civilisation of mind and morals, of art and beauty, of industry and content, of subordination and labour, of mutual kindliness, forbearance and help, with its results many and great ones, *pace* even Sir Harry Parkes, she owes in all essentials not to Europe or America, but to herself and Shinto. True, that to her innate capacity for developing that very civilisation, to the qualities that rendered her by birthright what she is, she owes Shinto itself; its aspects, political and religious, are but the outcomings of the Japanese nature, the spontaneous growth of the soil. Japanese nationality and Shinto are in truth one thing—nay, the latter is to all intents the summed-up expression, the concentrated essence of the former, living with its life, decaying with its decay, not to be divided from it but by death, the death of both. Born together, they will perish, if perish they must, together; the death-note, as the birth-note, of Shinto and Japan is one.

To the still stranger assertion that "Shinto has been completely superseded by Buddhism," the one hundred and twenty-eight thousand one hundred and twenty-three Shinto temples and shrines, in none of which Buddhism has art or part, scattered broadcast over Japan, together with what has been described, and can any day be verified by the most ordinary observation, of the popularity, nay, almost universality of the modes of worship connected with those shrines, may well be considered a sufficient and conclusive reply. Buddhist temples, many of them magnificent in size, and gorgeous in decoration, and Buddhist priests with holy vows and shaven heads, do indeed abound in the land, but Shinto is so far from being superseded by them, that it gives many signs of probably superseding them itself in great measure before long. That Buddhism has in past times partly corrupted, partly, by an assumed and deceptive likeness, supplanted Shinto in Japanese practice, that it has largely contributed to the introduction of a caste-system, of priestcraft, of superstition, with the mental and moral deterioration con-

sequent on these things, and more especially among the foolish-minded and unwise of the upper and ruling classes in days gone by, is unhappily true; nor less so that even now it continues to exert, though with diminished power, and on a more restricted scale, the same injurious influence that it exerted in the days of Kobo Daishi, Nichiren, and the other great leaders of bigotry and fanaticism in their day. This too is, however, a daily lessening harm. Nor has the wrong wrought to Japan by Chino-Buddhism been without some compensating advantages, greater certainly than could be looked for from the inweaving of any other foreign strand of thought or life into the national texture.

FROM MONTEVIDEO TO PARAGUAY.

So little is currently known in Europe, in England even, of the La Plata region, so little interest does it command, that I almost feel as though an apology were due for an Essay on such a subject. Yet though the land has, I admit, little Past, its Present is one not unworthy of notice, and promises a great, though still undefined, Future. To predict that Future, were it even possible to do so, is no business of mine; yet I will venture on a not ungrounded hope that the venturesome Confederations and Republics of the American South may have before them a nobler destiny than has yet been apportioned to their counterpart on the Northern Continent, higher aims, and wider fulfilment.

In Paraguay however, and in Paraguay alone does not the present only, though by no means unattractive, not the future with its remoter possibilities of fear or hope, fix our attention; the past too, if events included within the days of a yet living generation may be so entitled, has its own proper glories: the glory of a loyalty rare in the annals of mankind, the glory of a patriotism unsurpassed, I had almost said unrivalled, in the records of Sparta or Rome. And terrible as is the price that a nation is at times called on to pay for worthiness, that nation does well to pay it, rather than forfeit what alone makes existence worth the while.

> "Summum crede nefas animam præferre pudori,
> Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas."

A Roman penned these lines; but their meaning was never better understood, never more faithfully acted on, than by Paraguay in her long six years of agony, from Paso la Patria to Aquidaban.

IT was a clear, mild evening of spring in the latter part of the month designated in almanacks as October, but in Nature's annuary the April of this inverted antarctic world, when the Brazilian mail steamer *Rio Apa* was making her way cautiously up against the shallow and turbid waters of the River Plate, bound with cargo and a full complement of passengers, mostly Brazilians, some Argentines or Uruguayans, a few Germans—

where are not Germans to be met now?—and myself as a solitary specimen of the British sub-variety, from Montevideo to Asuncion, capital of Paraguay, and, indeed, further north yet, to the Brazilian capital of Mata-Grosso; but with that ultimate destination the present narrative has no concern. Viewed from anywhere the prospect of Montevideo is a lovely one, but most so from the harbour-waters. However ill-advised the old Spaniards may generally have shown themselves in their selection of sites for towns or sea-ports in South America, they, or their great captain, Don Bruno Mauricio de Zabala, chose well, could not, indeed, have chosen better, when, in 1726, they laid, after two centuries of inexplicable neglect, the first foundations of Montevideo. As a town it is perfect; as a harbour nearly so. With the lofty conical hill known as the "cerro," and the adjoining high lands on the west, and the bold jutting promontory—itself a ridge of no inconsiderable elevation—on which the bulk of the town is built, to the east, the noble semicircular bay, deeply recessed in the rising background on the north, is well sheltered from every wind and sea, the south and the south-west—this last, unluckily, the worst "of a' the airts"—being none other than the dreaded "pampero," or pampas-wind of these regions—excepted; at least until the long-projected breakwater, which is to keep out this enemy also, be constructed. But pamperos, like many other ills of this best of all possible worlds, are exceptions, and for most days of the year few harbours afford a safer or a more commodious anchorage than Montevideo; while landward a prettier sight than that presented by the white houses of the smokeless town, covering the entire eastern promontory down to the water's edge on either side, intermixed with large warehouses, public buildings, and theatres, and crowned by the conspicuous dome and towers of the massive and, *pace* Captain—now Sir Richard—Burton, fairly well-proportioned cathedral, would be hard to find anywhere else. Beyond, and all round the curve of the bay, countless villas of Hispano-Italian construction, one-storied the majority, and recalling in general form and arrangement the Baian or Pompeian pleasure residences of the Augustan age,

not unfrequently distinguished by lofty "miradores," or look-outs, gleam many-coloured from between thickly planted orchards and gardens, in which the orange-tree, the lemon, the acacia, the beech, the fig, the cherry-tree, the medlar, the vine, blend with the Australian eucalyptus, the bamboo, the banana, the palm, and other imported growths of the outer world, and shelter a perennial profusion of lovely flowers, and pre-eminently of luxuriant roses, worthy of the gardens of ancient Pæstum or of modern Damascus or Salerno. Shipping of every calibre and flag, steam and sail, makes an apt foreground to the prosperous life implied by the landward prospect; and a bright sky, stainless sunlight, and pure, healthful air, supply those conditions of enjoyment so essential, yet so often wanting, one or all, from the nebulous sea-side of northern Europe, or the treacherous beauty of equatorial coasts.

But Montevideo and the "Banda Oriental," or "East river-bank," to give the vigorous little republic of which it is the capital its prædilect name, must not detain us now. Already the intervening mass of the "cerro" has hid them from our view, and we are far out on the monotonous waters of the sea-like Plate estuary. Night sets in calm and clear; and I look for the four-fold stars, first visioned to the Florentine seer, when

> "Goder pareva 'l ciel di lor fiamelle.
> O settentrional vedovo sito,
> Poichè privato se' di mirar quelle!"

But the Cross, partly veiled, is just skirting the southern horizon, and will not be visible in its full beauty till near midnight; so that those strange, uncanny-looking nebulæ, known, I believe, to British seafaring vulgarity as the "Coal-sacks," but more truly resembling, if anything, gigantic glow-worms, alone denote, by their proximity, the starless pole of the Austral heavens. Truly, in more senses than one, a pole-star is yet to seek in the southern hemisphere, alike of the west or east—a fixed fulcrum, a central idea, a controlling and co-ordinating force. Such a star the slow procession of the equinoxes may in time supply to the courses of the concave

above; but who or what shall give it to the seething, ever-restless convex below? South America has her Bucolics, nor least the First; but the Fourth Eclogue is wanting from among the chaunted lays of Martin Fierro and the poetry of the Plate. Does it bide a future era? Let us be content with the present; and trust, "feebly" or not, as our temperament may dispose, the "larger hope."

And now, after ten hours, or thereabouts, of upward course, morning dawns for us on the world-famed New York of South America, the memorial and honour of Don Juan de Garay—the residence for more than two centuries of Spanish vice-royalty, and now the political and, to a great extent, commercial capital of that southern reflex of the Northern Union, the vast Argentine Confederation, the city of Buenos Ayres. I remember an Irish mate, when questioned on board a China-bound steamer, on which I happened to be a passenger, as to what was the first land we should sight of the Chinese coast, answering—and he could not have answered more appositely—"Faith! the first land ye will sight is a junk!" Were he now replying to a similar inquiry on board the *Rio Apa*, he might not less aptly say, "Faith! the first ye will see of Buenos Ayres is that ye will not see it at all!" So low is the coast, so great the distance from shore at which the shallowness of the river waters compels us to anchor, that a long low line of confused buildings, and behind them the confused summits, no more, of cupolas, turrets, and towers, seen at intervals over the warehouse fronts along the edge, is all Buenos Ayres presents to our eyes on first beholding. The view, or non-view, of Venice herself when approached by rail from Padua is not more unsatisfactory. I long to land, and resolve the illusion in the opposite sense to that by which earth's illusions generally are dispelled, by finding, as I know I shall, the reality of the Argentine capital better than its introductory show. But the earliness of the hour, and the shortness of the time allotted for stay, do not on this occasion permit a nearer acquaintance with the most populous, the wealthiest, and in many or most ways the most important city of Republican South America. And, in fact,

what knowledge worth the having could be acquired by an hour of hurried driving through square and street? So I resign myself to circumstances, and defer the accomplishment of my desires till the promised opportunity of the return voyage;—though the courtesy of the Argentine "Capitan del Puerto," or harbour master, has hastened to place at my disposal the means of convenient landing, moved thereto by the sight of the distinctive flag that notifies the presence of a British official—rank and name, of course, unknown, not to my readers worth the knowing—on board the *Rio Apa*. It is a courtesy which will be repeated, with scarce even a casual exception, at every Argentine or Paraguayan river station we halt at during the seven days of up-stream voyage yet before us.

There exists widely diffused in the Old World, nor least in England, an opinion, the origin of which, correctly estimated or otherwise, is not perhaps far to seek, that a distinct want or even refusal of every-day courtesy, an ostentatious "I am as good as you, and better," bearing, a disregard of the social claims, or what are held to be such, of rank, office, station, age, and the like, are the habitual characteristics of the citizens of non-monarchical states; that, *e.g.* a republican boatman is more rudely extortionate, a republican porter more importunately aggressive, a republican official more neglectful of politeness than their monarchical counterparts elsewhere; and so on to the end of the chapter. How far this may really be the case in some republics, the United States for instance, I cannot say, never having had the fortune to visit them, nor trusting much to "Notes" where accounts vary so widely. Thus much I can say, that, in my own limited experience of men and things, when a traveller loudly and habitually complains of incivility met with on his wanderings, the probability is that the traveller himself has been, to say the least, deficient in courtesy towards those he has come across. In Republican South America my own witness in these regards is, so far as it goes, of the most favourable kind. Certainly I had much sooner, if desirous of obliging civility, have to do with an Uruguayan or Argentine, not boatman or porter merely, but policeman,

official, or any chance acquaintance whatever, low or high, than with his like in many a European land that I could, but will not, name.

Again we are on our up-stream way, but now obliquely crossing over towards the north side of the mighty estuary, till what seems at first sight a continuous shore-line of swamp and brushwood, but what is in reality an aggregate of island banks, only just raised above the water-level, and covered with scrub, stretches across our path. These islands are, in fact, the secular bar at the mouth of the Parana River, before it broadens into the wider Plate. We shape our course to the right, where, at a little distance from the mainland shore of Uruguay—here a continuous succession of undulating downs, grazing-ground the most—the little granite island-rock known, like Cape Palinurus of Virgilian fame, by the name of a pilot, Martin Garcia, guards the only available entry from Rio de la Plata and the sea to the all-important navigation of the Parana and Uruguay rivers. Itself geographically, no less than geologically, a fragment of Uruguay, it belongs territorially to the Argentine Confederation by right of—well—the right of the stronger; a right too generally admitted for dispute or appeal. The channel on either side of it, deep enough for all mercantile navigation, is sufficiently commanded by the guns and forts of the place to make a hostile passage no easy matter.

As we leave Martin Garcia behind us, a broad wedge-like streak of darker colour, driven far into the muddy waters of the Plata, from its left or eastern bank, tells where the Uruguay, itself a mighty stream, merges in the great estuary, and marks the limit between the Argentine Confederation, amid whose lands more than eight hundred miles of river-navigation lie before us, and the Banda Oriental, or eastern shore, of which we now take our definite leave. Soon we have entered the Guazu, or great passage, one of the many that thread between shoal and island the Parana delta, and are by nightfall on the main river, here often whole miles in width; though its real breadth can rarely be taken in by the eye, partly owing to the general lowness of its reedy banks, partly to the countless

islands, which, for its entire course, line at brief intervals now one shore, now the other. They, and the shores too, often disappear for weeks together during the yearly floods, and, thus veiled, add not a little to the difficulties and dangers of the route. At present the water is at its lowest; but even now the stream is rapid and strong; its colour is turbid yellow; its surface often specked with masses of tangled weed and floating drift-wood from forests yet far away.

For five days more we journey up the Parana; passing, and occasionally stopping for cargo or passengers at many places of South American note—each one the outcome of some special activity or enterprise proper to the young and vigorous Confederation, between whose provinces the river flows. And first, Rosario, the city-capital, if coming fact fill up the outlines of forecast, of the Argentine commercial future; and already the principal focus and dividing point of the widest-spread railroad system existent south of the Isthmus of Panama. Next we salute the memory of the able but ill-fated Urquiza, deliverer of his country from the tyrant Rosas, to fall himself a victim to treachery base as any imbedded in the ice of Dante's Tolomea; as we sight the city of Parana, conspicuous by the ambitious dimensions of its public buildings, and the nine-years' memory of its transitory dignity, when raised by Urquiza to the rank of capital over the entire Argentine Confederation. Further up, "Bella Vista," or "Fair Prospect," shines out on us worthy of its name, where its white houses crown the high white cliffs that here overlook the mighty river; and many other are the places of provincial or even national note, till we reach the confluents or Corrientes of the Argentine-Paraguayan frontier. But it may, indeed must, be here enough for us to note that during these nine hundred miles of up-stream voyage, south to north, the scenery of either bank, while remaining essentially the same in its main geographical features all the way, is yet gradually modified by the progressive approach to the tropics into ever-increasing beauty and interest. The eastern length of shore, along the fertile provinces of Entre-Rios and Corrientes, gently rising from the river level into a succession of green uplands,

studded with tree clumps, and brightened by white groups of cottages and farmhouses, with a tall church tower here and there, passes by degrees from pasture-land into agriculture, fields of maize, orange-groves, tobacco-plantations, and even sugar-cane; a landscape which, allowance made for brighter colour and glossier vegetation, not without dwarf palms and Japanese-looking bamboo clusters here and there, often reminded me in its general, and even in its detailed, features of the noble backgrounds painted by Rubens, of which an example may be seen in the *Judgment of Paris* in our own National Gallery. There is something Flemish, almost English, in their fertile repose; but here the scale is grander. In this southern Mesopotamia —as "Entre-Rios" may be literally translated—nature has bestowed without stint whatever goes to make up those two solid and enduring bases of national prosperity—agriculture, and pasture; the third foundation, indicated by our Laureate in his exquisite English landscape scene, "Ancient Peace," is wanting here as yet. A few years, indeed, of comparative security and quiet have already done much, as the glimpses of cattle-stocked meadows, and the dark green patches of Indian corn show us, while our steamer rapidly glides past the gully-indented banks; but the peaceful years that have given these good things are, as yet, of recent date, and a very different condition, one of tumult, insecurity, and not infrequent war, prevailed here at a very short distance back from the present epoch. These evils are past, yet not so wholly as absolutely to bar the danger of their possible renewal, or to grant a desirable immunity from the agitations and vicissitudes consequent on the frequent and abrupt political changes of Buenos Ayres itself—communicated thence like earthquake waves to the furthest provinces of the Confederation. Still, enough advance on the path of law and order has been made to give reasonable assurance that the days of Oribe and Rosas, of gaucho-leaders and partisan plunderers are, year by year—as the settled population of the land increases steadily in numbers, wealth, and strength—less, and ever less, likely to recur; while the tale of those who have a vested interest in the tranquillity of

the country continues to grow, and with it grows the best probability and pledge of that tranquillity itself. Meanwhile, many detail inventions, some of them undoubted improvements, of recent introduction, such as the increased use of machinery on the farms, the network of strong wire fences, now spread over the face of the pasture-land; the extension of railway lines, and whatever other appliances tend to the facilitation of orderly communication, to the safeguarding of property, and to the substitution of methodised labour for the once over-numerous troops of half-wild horsemen and cattle-drivers—ready allies in the cause of riot and plunder—all lead up to the same result. It would be difficult now for a "caudillo," or an adventurer-chief, however popular his name or cause, to gather round his standard the formidable gaucho bands, all ready armed and mounted for march or fray, that were, scarce a quarter of a century ago, the terror of farmers and proprietors, of landowners and peasants, nay, even of townsmen and towns, of place-holding professionals and city officials through the regions of La Plata and La Banda Oriental. But the surest guarantee of national stability is to be sought and found in the extension of agriculture, and in the yearly encroachment of peasant, or small farmer, proprietorship on the too scantily-peopled pasture-grounds and cattle-breeding lands.

Thus much for the east bank of the river. But on its western side a very different range of scenery, little modified by man and his works, yet more clearly shows the gradual transition from cool to almost tropical climes. For here stretches back for hundreds of miles from the water's edge, up to the first outlying bulwarks of the great Andes Corderilla, the vast plain, level as the sea, of which it must have been the bed in times almost recent by geological computation, and known for the "Grand Chaco," the "Sahara" or Flat of South America, like in relative position and telluric formation to its African counterpart, yet most unlike in the all-important attributes of moisture and fertility. For this, the Chaco, is a land of streams and springs, of marsh even and swamp, with abundant growth of grass, plant, and tree, especially towards the north; its total

extent is roughly estimated as that of the British islands fourfold. Nominally included, though not without rival claims on the part of Paraguay and of Bolivia, in the Argentine Confederation, it is practically independent of all these, or of any other European-founded rule, being still, as of old times, the territory and dwelling-place of native Indian tribes, warlike the most part, tenaciously attached—and small blame—to their own autonomous existence, and resistent to the last—a "last" which can hardly now be far distant—against every Argentine attempt at civilising—that is, in plain language, subjugating and ultimately effacing them. Passively strong in their unencumbered activity for escape even more than for attack, and protected by the vastness of the open space over which they wander at will, they have thus far not only succeeded in baffling the organised military expeditions, successively directed against them by the Buenos Ayres Government, but have even negatived all but the narrowest encroachments of settlement and colonial proprietorship on their borders. Known, or rather designated by various names—Tobas, Mbayas, Lenguas, Abipones, Payaguas, and others—the tribes, with a certain general similitude of features and habits, much like that existing, say, between the various subdivisions of Teutonic or Slavonic origins in Europe, yet differ widely in character, dispositions, and language; some are pacific, and not unacquainted with agriculture and settled life; others, more warlike, subsist, it is said, almost wholly on the chase and foray; some are exclusively fishermen, others herdsmen or shepherds. Their dialects, equally diversified, for each tribe has its own, can all, it seems, be without exception referred to the two great mother tongues of South America, the Quinchua, language of Peru and Bolivia, and the Guarani, spoken in one form or other over the entire eastern half of the continent, and of which more anon.

Such are, summarily taken, the inhabitants of the Chaco. Extending from the populous province of Santa Fé, opposite to that of Entre-Rios, northward and up to and beyond the furthest limits of Paraguay, its level surface, seldom modified, however slight, by difference of elevation or by the hand of

man, presents in its changing vegetation a kind of scale by which to measure, not incorrectly, the ever-ascending range of its thermometric temperature. The solitary, oak-like ombu-tree, and the dwarfish willow and light-leaved poplar of the neighbourhood of Rosario and Santa Fé, all nations of a cool, though temperate, climate, gradually associate themselves further up with more varied and vigorous South-American growths, and the tall outlines of forest-trees, worthy the name, trace themselves more and more frequently on the low sky-line; till, as we approach about half-way to Corrientes, palms, at first sparse and stunted in structure, then loftier and grouped in clusters and groves, give evidence of a more genial temperature; while the bamboo, not, indeed, the feathery giant of the Philippines or Siam, but liker in size and fashion to the Chinese or Japanese variety, bends over the doubtful margin of river and swamp, often tangled with large-leaved water-plants and creepers, the shelter and perch of gay kingfishers and flocks of parti-coloured aquatic birds, the only visible inhabitants of this lone region, for the Indian tribes, shy, nor unreasonably so, of contact with the white races, keep aloof from the river coast, or, if they visit it, leave no trace of their having been there.

At last, on the sixth noon since we left Montevideo, we are off the shelving banks and scattered houses of Corrientes, a large town, whose importance and future growth are sufficiently assured by its position close to the junction of the two chiefest rivers of central and eastern South America, the Parana and the Paraguay. Of these the former, now subdividing itself into a network of countless and ever-shifting channels and islands, now united in one mighty stream of turbid yellow, here, a few miles north of the town, makes a stately bend, that half surrounds the fertile grazing-lands of Corrientes, and passes upwards to the north-east, where the eye loses sight of it among the dense forests of either bank; while from the north, exactly on the line thus far occupied by the Parana, descend the darker-coloured waters of the Paraguay, itself a noble river, here over half a mile in width, with an open, well-defined channel, few islands, and a current strong even now, at the lowest water-time

of the year. At this junction of the three great streams, a scene surpassing in beauty and calm grandeur any other of the kind that it has been my lot to look on elsewhere, we reach the southernmost limits of the Paraguayan territory, separated from the Argentine, and in great part from the Brazilian, to the south and east by the Parana, while on the west the Paraguay divides it from the Grand Chaco, and northward the Apa, itself a tributary stream of the Paraguay, forms the boundary of the little but compact dominion. Thus surrounded, the land of Paraguay enjoys the advantages of an almost insular position, a circumstance which has, no doubt, considerably influenced alike its history and the character of its inhabitants in all times.

Seen under the dazzling brilliancy of a South American sun, an adjunct rarely wanting here to the landscape, whatever the season of the year, Corrientes and its surroundings make up a panorama of rare loveliness and interest. To the east of us the glittering slope rises from the water upwards, with a foreground of small steamers, sailing-vessels, and countless boats moored along its margin, and above, a long succession of white, flat-roofed buildings, varied by tall church towers and the high fronts of public edifices—among them the spacious government house, once a Jesuit college; mixed with these are bright flower-gardens, dark green orange-groves and over-topping palms; beyond lie long ranges of tilled land and rich pasture meadows, bordered by strips and patches of forest; till, north-east, the majestic curve of the shining river, reaching miles and miles away into the distance, rests on and blends with the pale horizon line. North the sight rests on the cool, dense forests of Paraguay, and, breaking forth from among them, the mighty river of that land, sweeping down to merge its name and itself in the Parana; while eastward extends the boundless green of the fertile though scarce tenanted Chaco. And to the south flow and mingle the wide-spread meshes of the Argentine River, a net of silver cast over a plain of emerald. A region as yet only the cradle of nations; worthy to be one day their abode and palace. Already, signs are not wanting of hopeful meaning for the future; such are the crowds of boatmen, sailors, cattle-

drivers, waggoners, peasants, townsmen, who give life to the wharves; the ceaseless loading and unloading as cargoes of hides, wool, maize, flour, wood, fruits, &c., are shipped or transferred from one hold to another: the herds of large, sleek, long-horned cattle grazing; the rich pasture-lands by the river; the troops of half-tamed horses, a spirited and enduring breed, excellent for all kinds of work; the many specks and patches of shining white, that tell of farm-houses and dwellings, scattered frequent over the uplands beyond; these and much more denote at once the energy and the rising fortunes of the "Corrientinos," as the inhabitants of the land are called, and who, though yearly recruited more and more with immigrants of various nationalities, yet form the bulk of the resident population and give their tone to the rest. A tall, sinewy, hard-featured, manly race, of north Spanish origin mostly, but with a frequent dash of Indian or "Guarani" blood—evidenced by the darkness of their hair, their complexion, and their eyes; they make a not unpicturesque appearance in their striped ponchos—how it comes that these most convenient articles of out-of-door dress, manufactured the greater part nowadays in England, are not generally adopted by horsemen in Europe is a riddle to me—their slouched, broad-brimmed hats of felt or straw, and their wide boots, often adorned, after the traditional South American fashion with huge silver-plated spurs, though these last are falling into gradual disuse, and bearing similarly adorned whips of cowhide in their hands. Hardy and enterprising in no ordinary degree, they are not always amenable to the restraints of law and government; yet not of themselves wantonly turbulent or disposed to acts of violence; they make an excellent substratum and material for a state that cannot fail to hold high rank among those of the south equatorial world, whether it remain a component factor of the over-composite Argentine Confederation, or claim, as it is not wholly improbable it may, independence on its own account. The prevalent or, so to call it, official language throughout Corrientes is Spanish, but in the interior of the household, and out in the fields, Guarani is widely spoken; a link, among many others, of unity between

these provincials and the neighbouring Paraguayans. The Chaco opposite is also, as to the tribes that roam over it and the dialects they employ, in great measure a Guarani country; and, in spite of an expedition, actually sent thither in view of subjugation by the central Argentine Government, whose transports were lying moored alongside of the right bank as we passed—likely to remain so for some years to come; nor have even the narrow encroachments of settlement and colonial proprietorship on its borders much success to boast of as yet.

"Here it was," said an Argentine passenger to me, as we stood together on the paddle-box of our steamer, gazing on the magnificent view before us, "here it was that the main army of the allies forced an entrance into Paraguay." He pointed to a strip of slightly rising ground on the northern bank of the Parana, just beyond its easterly bend; the spot he indicated was backed seemingly by dense forest, and flanked by swamp and morass on either side. This is in fact *Paso la Patria,* the only available landing point for troops crossing the stream from Corrientes; and here it was that a united army of Brazilians, Argentines, and Uruguayans, more than 60,000 men in all, well-trained soldiers, supplied with the best of modern artillery, arms, and ammunition, and commanded by the best generals their respective countries could supply, were held for six long months at bay by considerably less than half their number of badly-armed, badly-clothed, worse fed Paraguayan recruits; and only at last succeeded in forcing the river passage at an immense loss, thanks not so much to their own courage or skill as to the rash over-daring of the Paraguayans themselves, who, again and again, abandoned the shelter of their defences to assume an offensive action, for which neither their number nor their means were in any degree sufficient.

There is no need here to recount, even in abstract, the tragic story of the great Paraguayan war of 1865–70. Six disastrous years, which so nearly accomplished the avowed aim of Paraguay's bitterest enemy, Brazil—for the Argentine and the Oriental Republics were merely the instruments of Brazilian policy throughout, and shared less in the intentions than in the

acts of the empire—that, namely, of wiping out of existence the most heroic, and, in many respects, the most hope-affording nationality of South America. Nor shall I recapitulate the almost incredible follies and crimes of the selfish and parricidal madman, on whose behalf, simply because he was their lord and chief, the Paraguayans poured out their blood like water on the battle field, while their wives and children perished by thousands in the mountains and forests, till scarce a third of what had been so lately a prosperous and rapidly increasing population was left, naked, starving, houseless, within the diminished limits of a land six years before a garden of Eden—now a desolate wilderness. Whoever wishes to know the details of that ruin may find them told, clumsily indeed, and in writings devoid of literary merit, yet bearing sufficient evidence of general truth, by Thomson, Masterman, and others of their class, actors themselves or sufferers in what they describe. Enough at present to say that from the Paraguayan officer, who, when borne wounded and senseless from the mad fray on board a Brazilian steamer, only regained consciousness to tear off the bandages, applied by pitying enemies to his wounds, and chose to bleed to death then and there rather than live an hour as a prisoner, down to the meanest private who, lying mangled and helpless on the field, had no answer for the offered quarter but a defiance or an attempted blow, one spirit only, that of devoted, all-absorbing patriotism, of a determination to dare everything in the country's defence, and an equally firm resolution not to survive its downfall, was the spirit of the entire Paraguayan nation; the spirit of Saguntum and Numantia, of Spartan Thermopylæ and Theban Chæronea in one.

But not the Paraguay of the past—if indeed events that occurred within the last twenty years only can historically be termed past—but the Paraguay of the present is our theme. Keeping straight on to the north we have left the wide expanse of the deflected Parana behind us on our right, and are now between the comparatively high and densely wooded banks of the Paraguay River, hereabouts turbid and swollen by the discoloured waters of the Vermejo, or "Red" River, its tributary

from the Western Chaco, and the Bolivian hills far away. With a stream seldom subdivided, and a width equalling on an average that of the Lower Danube at Widdin or Roustchouk, the Paraguay has, at least to a European eye, much more of the appearance of a river than the seemingly shoreless Plata, or the indefinitely ramified Parana. The banks too are much more varied in character than those of the last-named stream: clay, rock, sandstone, limestone, basalt, succeeding each other in abrupt alternation; the vegetation is also more abundant and diversified; forest trees of great height and extent of branch, attesting the toughness of their wood fibre, and among them palms of every kind, some feathery, as the coco, some fan-leafed, some densely tufted, tall bamboos, tree ferns, resembling those of the Antilles, and a close undergrowth of shrub and plant, now starred with spring flowers, among which white and pink predominate, as yellow in many districts of China and blue in European uplands. Along the banks, among weed and drift-wood, half in, half out of the water, lie huge, mud-coloured alligators; I am told that they are not alligators but crocodiles; it may be so, though in what precisely an alligator differs from a crocodile I do not know; anyhow these amphibia of the Paraguay are, in outward appearance, the very counterparts of their congeners in Siam. They watch us with dull, heavy eyes; every now and then a pig-like "carpincho," a sort of would-be-hippopotamus, dives out of sight at our approach; and we hear much of tigers, or rather panthers, said to abound hereabouts and to be good swimmers, but we do not meet any. To make up we see abundance of water-snakes, ugly speckled things, said to be poisonous; and birds of every size, description, and colour. Frequent too, on either side of the river, but most so on the eastern, are the signs of human habitation; pot-herb gardens, where gourds abound, fruit-trees, orange groves, now more golden than green in the lavish abundance of their sweet fruit; little, almost country-English looking, cottages, singly or in small groups, with neighbouring inclosures for cattle, perched on the upper banks at safe distance from the yearly water-rise, while, moored under the shade of overhanging brushwood and creepers lie

boats with mast or oar; canoes too with paddles, Indian fashion, are not rare. Such for a hundred miles and more upward from its junction with the Parana is the general aspect of the Paraguay and its shores. Of the war that raged so fiercely over and along this very river district in 1856–68, of the terrible combat of Bellaco, when the flower of the Paraguayan nationality, and indeed, whatever was yet available of the Paraguayan army, pitted in utter defiance, alike of strategy and of tactics, against an enemy thrice over their superior in numbers, and ten times so in arms and every appliance of war, with all the advantage too of a strongly intrenched position, perished in its reckless daring—refusing quarter or surrender almost to a man. Of the battle of Curupati, a little higher up, and the fierce onslaught of Tuyuti, where some eight thousand Paraguayan recruits, the half of them mere boys of twelve to sixteen years, drove before them, panic-stricken, the best of the allied armies, burnt and sacked their camp, and reduced them to an inaction of months before they ventured on further advance, and of the countless skirmishes, ambuscades, surprises, bombardments, land-fights, river-fights, which, in league with famine, fire, and plague, made of these fair valleys one vast charnel house for at least a hundred and fifty thousand corpses, not a visible trace now remains.

"A thousand battles have assailed thy banks,
But these and half their fame have passed away;
And slaughter heaped on high his weltering ranks;
Their very graves are gone, and what are they?
Thy tide washed down the blood of yesterday,
And all was stainless, and on thy clear stream
Glassed with its dancing light the sunny ray."

So sang Byron of the Rhine; so might he, with scarce the change of a word, have sung of the lower Paraguay. Nature's "work of gladness," an hour interrupted by man's equally appropriate work of destruction and misery, is soon resumed; with real or feigned indifference the mother-sphinx smiles on whatever betide the wayfarers of her domain.

Soon, however, we come on a break in the scene. The river,

hemmed in to narrowness by high banks on either side, makes a sharp bend, or, rather, folds round upon itself, changing its direction from north to south-east, then south, then due east, then by west to the north again; and amid these windings each shore, but principally the Paraguayan, is scarred by the traces of ruined batteries, range above range; while some ruins of broken walls, that once were barracks and storehouses, amid dismantled field-lines and earthworks, are overtopped by the tall ruins of a stately church—now a shattered shell of brick and stone. This is all that remains of Humaita, the important river-position fortified by Lopez to be the Cronstadt or Chatham of Paraguay, the outermost and strongest bulwark of the interior and of its capital, Asuncion. Nor could a better site have been chosen, had the means of defence been proportionate by land or water to the natural advantages of the position itself. Here, in 1868, a native garrison, scarce three thousand strong held out, not by the strength of the outworks, which they were numerically insufficient to man, nor by strength of artillery, of which, as of ammunition, they had little at command, and that of the worst quality, but by sheer dogged resolution and hand-to-hand fighting for four months of continual bombardment, carried on by a besieging force of at least twenty thousand men, backed from the river by a numerous fleet of ironclads and monitors, Brazilian and Argentine, well supplied with whatever modern ingenuity has supplied to destructiveness, nor yielded till starvation compelled the surrender of the survivors, now less than a third of their original number, and who, at the time of their capitulation, had been four days without food of any sort.

Never was a ruler, a chief, better served by his subjects than Solano Francisco Lopez, second of the family name; and never did any one personally less deserve such devotedness and fidelity. While the Paraguayans, whom his reckless and disproportioned ambition, or vanity alone had involved in a war with half, and more than half, the South American continent, a war of one to twenty, in which defeat and ruin might well from the outset have seemed foregone conclusions, were perishing for him by battalions in the field, or starving in the forest, men, women, and

children, during the six long years of a nation's agony, preferring death in its worst forms to foreign rule, or to any conditions of peace with the invaders of their land; Lopez himself, sole cause and originator of the war, well provided not merely with the necessaries, but even with the luxuries of life, lay hid behind the securest defences, or remained absent at a safe distance from the scene of actual combat: nay, worse yet, exercised on those within his immediate reach, on the best and most faithful of his own officers and servants, and ultimately on his nearest kinsmen, on his brothers, his sisters, his very mother, cruelties to which history, fortunately, supplies few parallels—I might almost say, taken in their totality, none. And yet it was for this man, sensualist, coward, tyrant, fratricide, matricide, that Paraguay lavished with scarce a murmur three-fourths of her life-blood; saw her men, women, and children exterminated by war, by disease, by famine, by misery of every kind, or carried off as slaves into distant bondage; saw her towns destroyed, her villages and fields wasted, her cattle harried, her wealth plundered to absolute bareness, nor even then submitted; only ceased to strive when she had practically, and for all national purposes, ceased to exist. More yet, were Lopez himself, in the worst anger of the infernal gods, to revive to-morrow, a living man, on Paraguayan territory, his reappearance would, there is every reason to believe, at once rally round him the obedience and the devotion of a vast majority among the yet surviving inhabitants of the land.

Rare even in Asia, rarer in Europe, rarest of all in the loosely-constituted, half-cemented societies of the New World, such fidelity as that of the Paraguayans stands out in history as a phenomenon hard to explain, an insoluble riddle, an enigma, almost a scandal to those around. Many and far-fetched enough in all conscience have been the conjectures. Thus, for instance, I have heard Paraguayan loyalty to this last and most unworthy of chiefs, no less than the submission shown to his far better and abler father, Carlo Lopez, and to the talented but half insane Francia of earlier years, attributed to—*stupete gentes!*—Jesuit training; and referred to ancestral education in the celebrated but greatly exaggerated "missions," situated, for the

most part, outside of the Paraguayan territory, of the sons of Loyola, long since overthrown by Spanish jealousy, dead for more than half a century before the first appearance of Francia, and buried beneath the ponderous verse of Southey, and the "Tale of Paraguay." A supposition, betraying no small ignorance as of the merits, so also of the defects of Jesuit teaching, and a yet greater ignorance of chronology and of the local facts themselves. The much talked-of "missions," or "reductions," were almost wholly either in extra-Paraguayan territory, that namely even now entitled "Misiones," south of the Parana, or in Uruguay, or, further off yet, in Patagonia; and numbered at the most, taken conjointly, 170,000 souls. Besides, the disciples of the Jesuit Fathers were wholly and solely Indian, of Guarani race indeed the most, and so far identical with the Aborigines of Paraguay proper, but absolutely without, indeed carefully kept apart from, the Spanish element, which not only blends with but greatly preponderates over the "native," or Guarani in the Paraguay of later history and of our own times. True the order of the Jesuits had, like other religious orders, its representatives in Spanish Paraguay, that is, down to the suppression of 1767; but their influence there, as elsewhere, could have been at the most corrective, not formative of the national character.

Other theorists again, somewhat better, perhaps, acquainted with the history of these lands, "account for" Paraguayan patriotism and loyalty, by attributing them to a kind of brutalisation supposed to have been induced by the tyranny of Francia and of the Lopez family; a psychological paradox that Godwin's self might have admired, but hardly surpassed: to state is to refute it. Besides, the form of government voluntarily adopted by an independent state, such as was the Republic of Paraguay ever since its final emancipation from the Buenos Ayres yoke in 1811, is not nor can, of its very nature be an extraneous influence, a moulding force introduced from without, but, on the contrary, a self-consistent development, an expression of the national idea from within. It is the nation that creates the government, not the government the nation. The follies, the

crimes of a Francia, a Solano Lopez are personal and their own; the position they hold, the power they use or abuse, the honour paid, the obedience are the people's. Patriotism, loyalty, devotion to a cause, to a leader, may indeed be fostered, be encouraged, they cannot be given by rulers, however skilful, far less can they be enforced; they are not things taught, but innate, not acquired, but connatural to the race.

And thus it was with the Paraguayan nation. Half Basque, for such was the greater part of the original Spanish immigration in these regions, half Guarani-Indian, it united in itself the tenacious courage, the unconquerable fidelity of the countrymen of Pelayo, to the indifference to life, the dread of dishonour, and the unhesitating obedience to their chief that have at all times and in all lands distinguished the Turanian, and, among the many off-shoots of that great stock, the Guarani race. And when, during the September of 1877, at the distance of half the globe, the Japanese Saigo, and his five hundred warriors of Satzuma, defended the heights of Shira-yama against fifteen thousand men, nor surrendered till death, they did but reproduce the heroism of their far-off Paraguayan half-cousins, alike outnumbered, alike unyielding to the last, at Humaita, at Yoati, at Cerro-Cora, eight years before. Nor is there any need to search further after the causes, the origin of that indomitable, more than Spartan, spirit: it is the undoubted heritage of a twofold race moulded into one, nor to be extinguished but with the race itself.

Enough of this; pleasanter scenes, suggestive of more cheerful thoughts and anticipations, await us in Paraguay. The Humaita ruins are already lost to sight among the graceful palms and dense orange-groves of the country around; the narrow river-bend widens out again into a broad and easy water-way, with abundant evidence of reviving happiness and prosperity along the green banks and meadows by its margin. Our next anchorage, for a few hours only, is off the flourishing little town of Pilar, the "neembuin," or "loud voice" of Guarani nomenclature, prettily situated on its small hill, yet almost hid from river view by the dense orchard screen intervening: it numbers, with its

outlying hamlets, over 10,000 inhabitants, many of them settlers from not-distant Corrientes, and gives us, in the aspect of its cottage-like houses and clean-kept streets and square, a foretaste of the neatness proper to Paraguayan villages and homes. No South American race has cleanlier instincts in person, dress, and dwelling than the Paraguayan; though indeed, so far as my experience goes, cleanliness is the rule, not the exception, throughout South America, Brazil, perhaps, in part, excepted. Pilar, at present the entrance harbour and commerce-gate of the Republic, was, in days not very far back, the only point of immediate contact between Paraguay and the outer world permitted by the jealous policy of Francia; and is even now, when the navigation and traffic of the Paraguay river are free from any exceptional restraints, an important wharf, thanks to its excellent position.

Doctor Francia's prohibitory system, by which he for many years isolated Paraguayan territory from what Carlyle has, graphically enough, *more suo*, if not exhaustively, designated as a "bewildered gaucho world," has been made a favourite theme for wordy abuse by a troop of superficial *soi-disant* liberal writers and interested assailants, from the Robertsons downwards. Nor would I for a moment wish even to palliate, much less to defend, the arbitrary and often cruel measures by which he carried out or supplemented his design. Yet in the main, and considering the isolation of the country as merely a temporary measure of protection against the fatal disintegration which must necessarily have ensued had Paraguay, with its yet unconsolidated and defenceless nationality, been left open to the irruption of the seething and surging deluge around, the Francian policy was right, and found ample justification in the astonishing vigour and concentrated patriotism of the little state, as displayed in the following generation; a vigour not even yet, after the unparalleled disasters of the late war, wholly exhausted.

For about one hundred and fifty miles more we continue our up-stream way by the noble river, somewhat lessened in bulk above the confluence of the Vermejo, and now in breadth and volume of water equalling, in its yearly average of fulness,

the Danube at Orsova; while in beauty of banks and scenery it much resembles the same river in its course from Regenswerth to Vienna, only that here the sub-tropical luxuriance of palms, bamboos, cacti, ferns, and broad-leaved undergrowths of glossy green—for here the predominance of leaf over flower, so correctly noted by A. Wallace, as characteristic of the tropics, begins to make itself felt—impart to the Guarani landscape a special charm denied to the land of the southern Teutons. Several small towns, each with its nucleus of thirty or forty houses, the remaining dwellings being widely scattered around among gardens and orchards, peep, at safe distance from the annual floods, over the wooded banks. Of all these centres of reviving life none is prettier or livelier than Villeta, not far below the capital, Asuncion, and famous for its orange-groves, whose produce suffices for the markets of Buenos Ayres and Montevideo both. It is a pleasant sight to see the fruit brought on board, as it always is, by long files of women, talking, laughing, singing as they trip along the planks that lead a considerable distance from the shore to the steamer, in their long white sacques, girt round the waist, and white cloths arranged mantilla-fashion over their heads—the invariable dress of the village daughters of the land. I had the good luck to be witness of the scene by torchlight, when dropping down the river on my return several weeks later.

Above Villeta the east bank sinks to the water-level and opens out to view a scene of exquisite loveliness. Far inland, across the plains, that here stretch to twenty and thirty miles distant from the river, lie field and orchard, farmhouse and cottage, with silvery glimpses of countless streams, tributaries of the Paraguay, and darker patches of forest: beyond, the blue serrated ranges of Mount Akai close in the view on the east; to the north the quaint, conical hill of Lambari, covered with bright green brushwood from base to summit, rises isolated from the water's edge and hides from view the town of Asuncion close beyond it. This region is described, some years before the war, by Commander Page, of the well-known United States' expedition some thirty years since up these rivers, as one densely

peopled in proportion to its fertility; and though terribly wasted during the later years of the great conflict and the Brazilian occupation that followed, it gives, in the frequency of its restored cottages, and the wide extent of its cultivation, clear evidence of returning prosperity and, if not wealth, at least sufficiency. Hour by hour, as we advance, the dwellings stand more frequent among the trees, the fruit or wood-laden boats and gliding canoes more and more enliven the river, till, rounding the basalt mass of Lambari, we come full in view of the Paraguayan capital; and, making our way with caution—for the water is at this time of the year at its lowest, the highest being in April or thereabouts—among the shoals that here beset the widened channel, we cast anchor opposite the Custom-house landing-place, at the western extremity of the town, which, following a sudden bend in the river, lies west and east.

The scene before us makes a striking contrast to that we have so lately witnessed. Nature soon repairs or conceals the traces of evil done by the wantonness of man; fields, corpse-strewn and blackened with fire one year, may be waving in all the golden luxuriance of harvest the next; orchard trees, though hewn and shattered, are not long in putting forth new boughs, clothed with fresh foliage and fruit; more yet, peasant cottages and even villages are speedily rebuilt; a few added years of peace, and the deficiency in the rustic population will have made itself good and disappeared. And thus it is with the country surroundings of Asuncion. Not so with the town; its spacious edifices, churches, or public buildings, some disused and deserted, others, in their half neglect, evidently all too wide for the shrunken requirements of a diminished state and people; others, sad monuments of ambitious and premature vanity, now shattered and shamefully defaced; everywhere empty shells of what once were happy dwellings, streets broken by wide gaps of ruin, and every token of havoc and spoil—these are wounds slow to heal, mutilations not easily replaced by fresh growth. But saddest of all sights in Asuncion is the very first and most conspicuous object seen from the river: the enormous palace of Francisco Solano Lopez, barely completed before its lord's own

downfall, now an empty shell, fronting the stream in long rows of dismantled portals and windows, black, ragged holes, like the eye-sockets of a skull. Its shattered turrets, shivered cornices, and broken parapets announce only too faithfully the absolute devastation of the lone and dismantled interior, whence the Brazilian plunderers carried off whatever they could lay hands on, even to the timber of the floors and the steps of the staircases, besides hacking and defacing whatever, from its nature, could not be carried away. Thus the palace has remained in appearance and condition, much resembling the Tuilleries as I remember seeing them as late as '77, and, like them, the wretched memorial of a sham Imperialism, cemented by immorality, and based on violence and fraud. For Lopez was one nor the least, of the many foolish moths, lured on to their destruction by the false glitter of the second empire; and the same year of 1870 that witnessed the overthrow of that colossal imposture at Sedan, witnessed, too, its new-world copy, Paraguayan pseudo-Imperialism, laid prostrate with its dying chief on the bloody banks of the Aquidaban; more fortunate indeed than its French prototype, because illumined at the close by one bright ray of honour in the warrior-death of Lopez, who, in that last moment, showed himself worthy of the hero-race he had too long misgoverned, while nothing but shame attends on the memories of Sedan.

Within the town itself, the roofless walls of a spacious but unfinished theatre, and the rough sketch, which, however, it would be a pity to leave as such, for the proportions are good, of a domed oratory, near the centre of the city, are also memorials of the vaulting ambition that o'erleapt itself and fell. The cathedral, and the yet older church called of Encarnacion, where Francia sought but did not find a final resting-place, are heavy, ungraceful constructions of Spanish times. Nor have the Government buildings, one of which was not *the* but *a* house of the terrible Dictator (for he had many, and continually shifted from one to another, for fear, it is said, of assassination), any pretension to beauty hardly to show. Nor are the remains of the old Jesuit college, now converted into barracks, any way

remarkable. The streets, wide and regular, are ill-paved and deep in sand; the public squares undecorated and bare. On the other hand, the dwelling houses, at least such of them as are constructed on the old Hispano-American plan, so admirably adapted to the requirements of the climate, are solidly built and not devoid of that beauty which domestic architecture never fails to have when in accordance with domestic feeling and life; cool courts, thick walls, deeply recessed doors and windows, projecting eaves, heavy and protective roofs; the furniture, of native woodwork, solid and tastefully carved, the pavement not rarely of marble, local or imported. I may here remark, in a passing way, that hard forest woods, often ornamental, and susceptible of high polish and delicate work, and marbles of various kinds and colours, some not inferior in beauty of marking to any that Italy herself can boast, will, when Paraguay is herself once more, take high place on the lists of her productions and merchandise. Needless to say that the houses are all of them, as houses should be, in a healthy but hot situation, one-storied, except where a mania for European imitation, encouraged by Lopez, among other shams of Parisian origin, has reared a few uncomfortable and ill-seeming dwellings of two or even three stories, flimsey, pretentious, and at variance alike with the climate and the habits of Paraguay. To these unlucky anomalies may be added the huge, ill-built, unshapely railway station (the railway line itself runs to the town of Paraguari, about forty-five miles south-east, and is the earliest in date among South American lines) at the east end of the town; though this construction fortunately possesses one good quality which may avail to remedy all its many bad ones—the quality of evident non-durability. As to the railway itself, it is, like most things involving complicated machinery and capital in South America, a foreign undertaking, under foreign management; with what benefit to the managers themselves and the shareholders I know not; a minimum of convenience and utility to the country and its inhabitants is, at present, anyhow, the most evident result. Nor is this either new or strange. "You must scratch your own head with your own nails," says the homely Arab proverb; and if the

resources of a land do not suffice to its public enterprises, even the most urgently needed ones not excepted, without calling in the capital and aid of foreigners—well—it had better wait till they do suffice. In this particular instance, however, amendment is promised; let us hope it will be effected.

Pleasantest and cheerfullest of all out-door sights to the visitor of Asuncion is the market-place, situated, as near as may be, in the centre of the town. It is a large square block of open arcades and pillared roof, whither the villagers from around daily bring their produce, intermixed with other wares of cheap price and habitual consumption; the vendors are almost exclusively women. Maize, water-melons, gourds, pumpkins, oranges, manioca flour, sweet potatoes, and with these half-baked bread, cakes, biscuits, and sweets, such are the chief comestibles; tobacco, of dark colour and strong flavour, "and yerva," the dried and pulverised leaf often spoken of as "Paraguayan tea," may be added to the list. Alongside of these a medley of cheap articles, for use or ornament, mostly of European manufacture, matches, combs, cigarette paper, pots and pans, water-jars, rope knives, hatchets, small looking-glasses, handkerchiefs, ponchos, native saddles, much resembling Turkish ones, and very commodious for riding in, coarse silver ornaments—I might fill a page more, at least, with the list—are exposed for sale. But the chief interest of the scene is the study of the buyers and sellers themselves. The men, who mostly belong to the former class, and are from the villages round about, arrive mounted on small rough-coated horses, unclipped of mane or tail. The rider's dress consists of a pair of loose cotton drawers, coarsely embroidered, and over them and round the waist a many-folded loin-cloth, generally white; or else in a pair of loose, baggy trousers, much like those worn by Turkish peasants in Anatolia, and girt by a broad leather belt, almost an apron for width. These, with a white shirt, and over all a striped or flowered poncho, complete the dress; boots are rarely worn, though the bare feet are sometimes, but rarely, equipped with silver-plated spurs. The features and build of the riders present every gradation of type from the light-complexioned, brown-haired, red-bearded,

honest manliness of the ancestral Basque, to the copper hue, straight black hair, narrow dark eyes, obliquely set, beardless chin, flattened nose, and small wiry frame of the aboriginal Guarani. But it is not with the Spanish as with the Lusitanian breed. For while the latter when crossed with Turanian, Aryo-Asiatic, or African blood passes at once into an inferior type of physical degeneration, as Goa, Macao, Timor, and Brazil, unfortunately prove beyond question, the Spanish seems, when similarly blended, to result generally in a progeny no way inferior in corporal strength and comeliness to the Iberian stock, and occasionally superior. The fact is one continually noticed, and much commented on; yet I have never either heard or been able myself to supply any plausible conjecture of its cause. Nor again among the Creole descendants of Hispano-Indian parents is the trite; and, in too many other instances, over-true remark, that the "mestizo" or half-blood generally exhibits in himself the good of neither stock, the evil of both, in the least verified; far more often the exact reverse, as here in Paraguay, where Vascon honour, truthfulness, daring, and generosity, have blended with Guarani gentleness, endurance, and unquestioning loyalty, even to the death, into a type that is not the exception, but the rule.

Such are the Paraguayans of the country. In Asuncion itself, under the combined influence of a large number of foreign residents, of a river-traffic that gives the town somewhat of the character of a sea-port, and of the evils, physical and social, inseparable, it seems, from large towns and capitals, the national type is, necessarily, not so uniform or pure. In fact, to judge of Paraguay in general by the sights and experiences of Asuncion, would be no less unjust than to take Southampton, Liverpool, or even London, whereupon to form an exhaustive estimate of England and its inhabitants. Here, too, at the capital, the depression, or prostration rather, consequent on the late war, has been deepest, and is even now most persistent. Yet of the courtesy, the hospitality, the sociability, the cheerfulness, the music, the dancing, for all which Paraguay has long been celebrated, nor wrongly so, the visitor will even

now find plenty to greet him in Asuncion, where, among the officials especially, he will meet the most highly endowed by birth and education that the nation can show. Still after all, it is not here, but in the country districts that the distinctive patterns of Paraguayan life are clearest drawn; and it is there accordingly that my readers, if they care to accompany me so far, must seek them; quitting the capital, where in the chief resort of traffic and strangers, as is but too general, the fatal contagion of a mimic Europeanism, the mania for discarding whatever is not in accordance with the stereotyped monotony and tasteless conventionalism of Boulevard or Fifth Avenue existence, the blight that, like Tennyson's "vapour, heavy, hueless, formless, cold" creeps on with Western-European intercourse over land after land, withering up and obliterating in its advance all individual or local colour, form, beauty, life; this pseudo-civilisation or progress, by whatever name it be called, has done most to obliterate the national and characteristic features of the Paraguayan race, and to substitute for them the servile imitation of affected cosmopolitanism and denationalised uniformity. Happily the evil has but partially and superficially infected Asuncion itself as yet; while beyond its radius, and the actual line of the Paraguari railway, life in the bulk of Paraguay, and life's accessories, differ but little, if at all, from what they were and have ever been from the first days of the compound nationality, down to the constituent assembly of 1870. Long may they remain so.

But an up-country journey in Paraguay, let us own, has its difficulties; many of them, indeed, relative merely, or imaginary —others real and positive enough. The latter are to be summed up chiefly, if not wholly, in the want of organised inter-communication, both in regard of roads and conveyances, between district and district; a terrible want, which the vigorous administration of the Lopez dynasty has already done something to remedy, but which long war and succeeding desolation have renewed and intensified by destroying whatever that ill-fated family had organised or constructed. Bad inns, or none, and in their defect a copious and freely offered hospitality, which,

however, of necessity, supposes in those who accept it a readiness to be content with Paraguayan fare and lodging such as is rarely found among the "fat and greasy citizens" of European or even South American towns; hot suns, frequent thunder-showers, rough way-tracks, streams to be swum or forded, mosquitoes, foot-perforating chigoes, here called "piques" —though these are of such rare occurrence as to belong rather to the purely imaginary catalogue of disagreeables—and other insects; and last, not least, difficulty of converse with a population to which Guarani, or "Indian," is much more familiar than Spanish. Such are what may be called "relative" obstacles, things to be accounted or disregarded by the traveller according to his own individual acquirements and idiosyncrasies; while lions, tigers, alligators, wild Indians, poisoned arrows, &c., however terrible in the lively fancy of many narrators, may be safely classed among imaginary perils. Lions, that is pumas; tigers, that is leopards; Indians more or less wild, poisoned arrows too, exist, doubtless, in the mountains and among the deep forests of Paraguay, but of these, and such as these, the traveller, so long as he keeps to the inhabited districts, or, if beyond their limits, to the ordinary routes of transit will hear little, and see less.

Still the negative difficulties—want of means of conveyance, want of roads, want of occasional interpreters, want of sufficient lodging—have, each in some measure and degree, to be taken into account; and against these the Asuncion administration, with the true courtesy and hospitable liberality of Paraguayan tradition, hastened to provide on my behalf. An officer, well acquainted with the country, a soldier for attendant, and three good horses, were placed at my disposition for the proposed journey, and a programme, or *carte de voyage*, was supplied, of a nature calculated to make me acquainted with as much as time and circumstances might allow of village life and land.

Having but a short leisure, barely four weeks in fact, at my disposal, I determined, at the advice of my kind hosts, to select for my visit what I may best summarily designate as the south-centre of the country; a district of hill and dale, rivers and

lakes, thickly—for Paraguay, that is—set with villages, and having on its east the high forest-clad mountain ranges, beyond which flows the Parana, here the frontier of Brazil; on the south the rich plains and reedy marsh-lands of the Argentine province of Misiones, so named from the well-known Jesuit missions of former times, which here attained their fullest development; northward the successive hill ranges and wide *matè* plantations of Upper Paraguay; west, a low screen of broken ground and copse, behind which flows the great river that gives its name to all the rest. After which geographical outline, I will only add, by way of general description, that if any of my readers have had the good fortune to visit beautiful Auvergne, in Central France, and the scarce less beautiful Eifel district by the Moselle, they may, by blending the chief topographical characteristics of these two, clothing the surface of hill and dale with the graceful yet vigorous growths of a half-tropical vegetation, and over-arching the whole with a sky borrowed from Titian's 'Bacchus and Ariadne'—a sky, *pace* even Mr. Ruskin, by no means "impossible" in Paraguay, though I can well believe it so in Western Europe,—having done this, I say, they will have before their mind's eye at all events a tolerable likeness of the country I would gladly sketch, though I cannot worthily paint.

One name, judiciously selected from among the rest, may occasionally serve as a peg whereon to hang a whole chain of ideas, or, if the comparison be preferred, as a centre round which the vagueness of general description may crystallise into definite form. A secret of mental chemistry well-known to poets; few readers of the 'Paradise Lost' have, probably, hunted out "Imaus" on the map, yet all have the picture of Milton's mountain-dwelling vulture distinct in their imagination; nor is it for nothing that the "sons of Eden" were inhabitants of "Telassar," though I have not been able to discover its whereabouts in any atlas-index as yet. But we all feel that a place with such a name must have been worthy of the race. For us, wanderers in an else unlocalised region, the mountain of Akái shall serve our turn.

The word itself, in aboriginal Guarani, means "burning" or "conflagration;" and the mountain that bears it is a castle-formed mass of comparatively recent volcanic debris, situated in the midst of a region studded with at least a dozen smaller lava-cones, over which Akái towers to a height of 2,000 feet and more. Its abrupt sides, partly clothed with patches of thorny brushwood, partly bare, are made up of loose masses of laterite and volcanic tufa, among which huge angles of harder lava project far out, rendering the ascent of the slope very difficult, indeed almost impracticable; while the few points at which an upward path, though no easier than "*Tra Lerici a Turbia, la più diserta, La più ruinita via*" of Dante's experience, is yet possible, are guarded by colonies of wasps, the "Spanish soldiers" of the Antilles, long, gaunt, bronzed, vicious-looking creatures, of a tenaciously spiteful disposition, who have, for reasons best known to themselves, made of these rocky gullies their favourite homes, and resent intrusion. The peasants of the neighbourhood are, as a matter of course, little disposed to the labour—from their point of view a very unprofitable one—of scrambling up barren heights; but some German tourists had, I was informed, about two years before climbed the mountain, and, on their re-descent, reported a large and well-defined crater at the summit, long since, it seemed, quiescent, and strewed at the bottom with a heavy metallic-looking kind of sand, whereof they brought back with them a sample. This, for whatever cause, they left in a house of the village, close by, where I saw and, so far as I could, examined it; finding it in the result identical with the Sicilian Palagonite described by Lyell in his 'Elements of Geology.' That volcanic energy is still at work within, or, more probably, at some depth below the mountain, though of active eruption no precise record survives in that most brief and inaccurate chronicle termed "human memory," this narrative as it proceeds will sufficiently show.

Round Akái the soil, deep furrowed with rain-torrents, is almost exclusively composed of volcanic ash and decomposed lava, reminding me not a little of the neighbourhood of "Aghri Dagh," or Mount Argæus, in Cæsarea, of Asia Minor, like that

region too in its wonderful fertility, almost, though not quite rivalling the prodigal luxuriance of plantation, field and grove at the base of the ever-burning Mayon pyramid in Philippine Albay. Most of the ground-springs hereabouts—and if each of them has a naiad of its own, the country must be thickly peopled with the daughters of Zeus—are ferruginous, some strongly so; thermal springs too were reported to me, but with the true vagueness of localisation proper to the Hodges of every land and country, nor did I myself come across any.

It is just a short half-hour before sunset, and a large yellow moon, nearly full—for it is the thirteenth or fourteenth day of the lunation—balances on the east the yet larger orb of clear gold now near the western margin, while our party, some seven in all, myself, my military escort, and four chance companions of the road-side, ride our unkempt, but clean-limbed, spirited, and much-enduring Paraguayan nags into the village of . . . .

I have my motives for not giving the name. We are all of us, the riders at least, well tired, for the afternoon has been intensely hot, and we have come from far. Paraguayan villages, or country towns, if you choose, though perhaps the title of "town" should be reserved to such as are the residence of a "Jefe Politico," or sheriff of the county, are all, large or small, much of a pattern; and that, in its general outlines, a Spanish one. Central is a large open grass-plot or square, and in the midst of that again the church, a barn-like building, utterly plain outside; the ornament within is of woodwork, sometimes very old and curiously carved; painting—if there be any—is of the crudest; occasionally relieved by dingy silver ornament, recalling Byzantine or Armenian reminiscences, an unartistic whole. Whatever may have been the case in the days of clerical or Jesuitical leadership, religion has long since ceased to be the central occupation of the Paraguayan mind. It is, now at all events, an accessory, rather than a principle, of life, nor, I am inclined to think, was it ever, in spite of outward, and to a certain extent constrained appearances, anything more among the Guaranis. Yet so far as it goes it is quite genuine, and its influence beneficial, much in the same degree, and to the

same result, as Buddhism in Burmah or Siam. Happily too it is here, as there, practically undisturbed either by missionary meddling on the one hand, or anti-clerical fanaticism on the other.

Close by the church is the bell-tower, square, and with its cage-like wooden upper story, twice the height of the building or more. In this land of electricity, for such is the entire Paraguay, Parana, and La Plata valley from Asuncion to Montevideo, that belfries should be often struck by lightning need excite no surprise. Jove of old had a noted predilection for thus demolishing his own temples; perhaps he remembered Semele. Next to a belfry, the most frequent victim—sadly frequent indeed—of a thunderbolt in Paraguay is a grey horse, its rider included; not only did I hear of many such catastrophes, but one actually happened, the human victim being a widow's son of eighteen or thereabouts, close by a village where I was taking shelter during the storm. Should a dog, as is very generally the case, be of the party, it escapes unhurt. Of all which I can suggest no explanation; doubtless it is "for the best," nor do the Paraguayans, a very practical race, greatly vex their souls about that over which they have no control.

The houses that make up the square itself, are all one-storied cottages, in English nomenclature, but with several rooms inside, and almost invariably fronted by a verandah—good shelter against sun or rain; the roof is of thatch; the flooring of trodden earth, and scrupulously clean. Cleanliness is the rule in Paraguay, and it extends to everything, dwellings, furniture, clothes, and person, nor are the poorer classes in this respect a whit behind the richer. Above all, the white sacques and mantillas of the women, and the lace-fringed shirts and drawers of the men, are scrupulously clean; nor is any one article in greater demand, though fortunately in proportional supply, throughout the country than soap. But to return to the village itself. Each house has behind it a garden, small or large, as the case may be, in which flowers are sedulously cultivated: they are a decoration that a Paraguayan girl or woman is rarely without, and one that becomes the wearer well. Without pre-

tentions to what is called classical or, ethnologically taken Aryan beauty, the female type here is very rarely plain, generally pretty, often handsome, occasionally bewitching. Dark eyes, long, wavy, dark hair, and a brunette complexion do most prevail; but a blonde type, with blue eyes and golden curls, indicative of Basque descent, are by no means rare. Hands and feet are, almost universally, delicate and small; the general form, at least till frequent maternity has sacrificed beauty to usefulness, simply perfect; as to the dispositions that dwell in so excellent an outside, they are worthy of it; and Shakespeare's "Is she kind as she is fair?" might here find unhesitating answer in the affirmation that follows: "Beauty dwells with kindness." A brighter, kinder, truer, more affectionate, more devotedly faithful girl than the Paraguayan exists nowhere. Alas that the wretched experiences of but a few years since should have also proved, in bitter earnest, that no braver, no more enduring, no more self-sacrificing wife or mother than the Paraguayan is to be found either!

My readers will, I am sure, pardon this digression. Let us back to our village; and first of all, as in duty bound, to the "Jefatura," or government house; in general appearance and architecture no way differing from the dwellings to its right and left, except that it is less subdivided internally, and consists of only one or two large apartments, to which sometimes a lock-up with a pair of stocks in it for minor offenders is added. Criminals are sent under guard to Asuncion. But crime is rare in Paraguay; though petty larcenies, and some trifling offences against village decorum and law are not infrequent. The authority of the "Jefe" or sheriff, is chiefly that of a police magistrate; though a general superintendence of roads and bridges, or, to speak more exactly, of where roads and bridges were or ought to be, but in the present poverty of the land are not, falls also within his department. "Evidently these Guarani-Vasco Paraguayans have, like their Malay half-cousins, a wonderful talent for quiet self-government, and little need of state machinery or official direction and control," was a reflection forced on me by what I heard or saw at every step of my journey,

but not least when visiting the sanctuaries themselves of provincial authority or law.

Prefect, commissioner, judge, and so forth, have each of them his private and family dwelling somewhere else in the square. An *omnium-gatherum* shop or store, combining ironmongery, drapery, grocery, liquor, dry goods, toys, everything useful or, in its degree, ornamental, is sure to occupy a much-frequented corner—it is certain to be kept, not by a Paraguayan, but a foreigner; generally an Italian, sometimes a Spaniard or a Corrientino. Indeed, of such shops the larger villages boast up to three or more. Adjoining the principal square may be a second, of which the central object is an open wood-supported shed with a raised floor, doing duty as market-place, whither meat, fish, vegetables, and so forth, are brought for sale; or this useful construction may be situated in a straggling, irregular street, which in such case forms the backbone of the village. Somewhere in the neighbourhood is the public burying-ground, surrounded by a wall, and with a large wooden cross in the centre; monuments or inscriptions denoting the stories of the several dead are, I think, unknown.

We have made for the prefect or sheriff's house, and have, by his readily-given invitation, alighted in front of the door. A further invitation, to enter the house, is temporarily declined in favour of the lovely evening outside; and we seat ourselves in the verandah, looking out on the open square before us, and over its low roof-lines on a fringe of palm and orange-groves, above which, in the dark purple shadows of a deepening twilight, rises the serrated range of Akái, some fifteen or twenty miles distant. But our attention is first claimed for the Alpha, though by no means the Omega, of Paraguayan hospitality, the national *maté*. What coffee is among the Arabs, tea, among the Japanese, that or more is *maté* to the Paraguayans, and, I may add from my experience of all three, to their guests.

True, the word *maté* though commonly used by Europeans, and even occasionally by South Americans, to designate the drink itself, is a misnomer; its proper signification being the small, tough, oblong gourd, generally dyed black, and sometimes

compelled by bandaging, while yet green, to assume a fantastic shape, out of which the infusion of the "yerva" itself, or "Paraguayan tea" is taken. The leaves of this tea-plant, if an ilex may so be denominated, are gathered amid the wide plantations of its growth on the borders of, or within the tropics of, Northern Paraguay, and having been dried by a careful and elaborate process, of which, not having myself witnessed it, I omit the description, are reduced to a coarse, light-green powder. With this the gourd, or *matè*, is more than half-filled, and hot or boiling water poured in upon it. Almost immediately afterwards, with as little time left for "standing" as may be, it is presented to the drinker, who imbibes it through a silver tube, plain or ornamented, from eight to ten inches in length; one extremity is somewhat flattened for convenience of suction, the other expands into a bulb, or *bombilla*, pierced with small holes, which acts as a strainer to the liquid in which it is immersed. The servant who has brought it stands by waiting till the infusion has been drawn out, when he goes to refill it, and returns to present the apparatus to the next of the company in turn, and so on, till after two or three rounds a "*Basta*," "enough," or "*Gracias*," "thanks," gives the signal for its final removal.

Taken by itself and unsweetened—for those who add sugar to it, or, yet worse profanation, milk, put themselves merely out of court, as incapable of appreciating its merits—this drink is of all light and refreshing tonics that I know, Arabian coffee itself hardly excepted, the pleasantest and the most effective. The taste is aromatic and slightly bitter, not much unlike good Japanese tea. But rightly to esteem and enjoy it, one should have earned it by a long day's ride, in a sub-tropical sun, and drink it reposing in the cool shade, to feel fatigue pass into memory only, and vigour return with rest to every limb.

Meanwhile, others of the village magnates have come up to salute the new arrivals, and talk, occasionally in Spanish for the benefit of the strangers, more often in Guarani when between the Paraguayans themselves, is freely entered on. Though cautious, and wonderfully secretive where secrecy befits, a

Paraguayan is by nature cheerful and even open, fond of a jest, a laugh; free, in a degree I have seldom met among the natives of any other land, European or not, from prejudice or antecedent ill opinion; free too from shyness or any constraint except that of inbred courtesy and manly self-respect; slow to give his entire trust; slow to distrust also. Hence his acquaintance is easily made, and often ripens into real friendship. The expansive part of his nature may, probably, be due to Vasconian, Asturian, or Cantabrian descent, the more cautious and self-contained to Indian; his courage and endurance to both.

Slight as is my knowledge of the Guarani language, my readers may perhaps care to hear the little I have been able to ascertain about it, more by practice than by set study, by ear than by books. Spoken in one dialect or another over the entire eastern half of South America, Uruguay, whence every vestige of its Indian occupants, the brave Charruas, has unfortunately disappeared, being the only territorial exception, Guarani belongs to the yet wider-spread polysynthetic language-system, common to every indigenous American race, north, central, or south from Alaska to Patagonia. How far this system, with the almost countless dialects comprehended in it, stands out, in Mr. Keane's words, as "radically distinct from all other forms of speech," I cannot say. In Guarani, at all events, the amount of permutation, elimination, or agglutination of consonants or syllables, affixes and particles, is not more irregular, hardly even more complex than in old-Turkish, or Japanese. Where no native system of written characters exists, it is of course free to a stranger, employing his own alphabetic symbols, to run together as many words as he pleases into one; in pronunciation Guarani words are distinct enough and strongly accentuated, most often on the last syllable. Of gutturals there is a moderate, of nasals a more liberal allowance; in copiousness of vowels Guarani hardly yields to Italian itself. Lastly it is a pleasant language to the ear, and easily picked up, as the facility with which English, Germans, and other strangers acquire it sufficiently proves.

Whether, however, the speech itself be autocthonous, as Mr.

Keane opines, or derive a trans-oceanic origin from some far back Mongolian or Turanian stock, no one acquainted with Kalmuk or Nogai Tartars, or Tagal Malays on the one hand, and with pure-blooded Guarani-Indians on the other, can an instant doubt their community of race. It is not the complexion, the hair, the eyes, the general form of body and limb only that bear witness to as near an approach to identity, as long ages of diversity in climate and surroundings can admit, but, more yet the sameness of mind, of moral standard, of dispositions and tendencies individual or collective, of family and social organisation, of ideas and beliefs, all of these strictly in accordance with those of the Mongolian branch of what Mr. Ferguson, with sufficient accuracy at least for our present purpose, denominates the "Turanian" division of the human race. How the first Mongolians—parents of the manifold "Red-Indian" families by whom the New World was overspread—came to emigrate hither, at what epoch, by what route, in one band or in many, are questions little likely ever to be solved; monuments and tradition afford but confused and contradictory hints at most; and conjecture is not less idle than easy, to make. Nor, again, would a solution, even if absolutely negative, much affect the existing facts. Identity of nature is one thing, community of origin is another; the beginnings of human existence are unknown, nor is the Darwinian theory of descent better supported by proof than the mythological; nor does it apppear why the same cause or cases, whatever it or they may be, which originated the Mongolian race in Asia should not, simultaneously or at a different period of our planet's existence, have originated another race of mankind in America, identical or nearly so with the first, yet wholly independent of it in genealogical descent. Anyhow the resemblance is a certainty, though the "how" and "why" may be, and are likely ever to remain, uncertain and unknown.

Seated as we are in the verandah, and, by this time, a group of a dozen or more, including the head authorities of the district, besides others who are not authorities at all, but merely small farmers or peasants, the talk turns chiefly on local interests, agricultural topics, and the like; the events of the capital and

politics, generally so favourite a topic in many others of the South American Republics, being here seldom discussed. The right to be well governed, the right to cultivate his own land, tend his own cattle, and to enjoy in peace the fruits of his labour, is the only right the Paraguayan greatly cares for; what form of administration, what government, what party, what policy assure him these, he heeds very little. There is no content like that of a land-owning population; and such from the highest to the lowest is the country population of Paraguay. Large estates are rare, and where they exist are cultivated by tenants whose fixity of possession is not less undisputed than the general proprietorship of the owner in chief; rent is paid in produce; and the share retained by the actual cultivator of the land is in the fullest sense his own. It is a state of things in which wealth, as understood in Europe, is rare; destitution, like that too frequent in many parts of Europe, unknown. The capitalist is absent; but his train, hired labour, eviction, landlessness, homelessness, destitution, discontent, rebellion, revolution, are absent too.

Politics, the occupation of the idle or the dissatisfied, being thus ignored, we have free leisure for the far more profitable, as also pleasanter topics of agriculture, its resources, its development, its prospects. I may as well here remark, once for all, that although both horses and cattle are reared to a considerable extent within the Paraguayan territory, yet the country neither ought to, nor can ever, become a cattle-breeding one in the sense of the vast pasture-lands of the South Argentine Confederation, or even of Southern and Western Uruguay. Here, between degrees 27°-22° of latitude, with an average yearly temperature somewhat above 70° F.; and with pasture copious enough, but rank and overgrown—the consequence of a winterless climate—horned cattle can never attain, either in size or quality, to a successful competition with those reared in cooler lands; while sheep, for whatever reason—the presence of a poisonous herb, called "mio-mio" among the grass, is often assigned as the cause, but it does not seem to me a wholly sufficient one—are as complete a failure here as in the Philippines or Japan. Horses breed well; but except for local use

are in little request; besides, these too are better reared in the south. Meanwhile, the agricultural capabilities even of those districts hitherto in some measure set apart for pasture, are infinite, and the produce less liable to preponderant competition. Putting all which together, it is clear that the Georgic of Paraguay must always be the first rather than the third of the Virgilian series.

In this Georgic three different kinds of cultivation take precedence as capable of yielding the largest and most advantageous results: the sugar-cane, tobacco, and the "yerva" or Paraguayan tea. Of these the first is grown extensively; but, in the absence of fit machinery for extracting and refining the sugar, "*cana*" or an inferior kind of rum, obtained by a coarse distillation of the unrefined molasses, is the principal result. The sugar-mills in use are small, and of the roughest kind, worked by hand or cattle, after a fashion that may still be seen in the small negro holdings of Dominica; the boiling and cooling—for crystallisation is, of course, out of the question—are equally primitive. Yet from the vigorous growth of the cane, and the amount of saccharine yielded, it is evident that the material exists for more profitable purposes; and if the highly-perfected and costly sugar-factories of Martinique, of Demerara, be for the present beyond the means of Paraguay, there is no reason why the simpler yet sufficient methods successfully adopted in Barbados should not meet with equally good results here. The experiment would be worth the making; the project is one I have often heard discussed among the peasantry, with much desire for its realisation.

But no subject is more popular, none more readily entered on, than the cultivation of tobacco. Much indeed is actually grown in Paraguay, and the quality of the leaf is excellent, by no means, in my judgment, inferior to that of Cagayan, or, to give it its commercial title, of Manila itself. But the art of drying and preparing the leaf, no less than that of making it up, when prepared, into proper form, has yet to be learnt in Paraguay; both processes are at present conducted in a very unsatisfactory and hap-hazard manner; and the result is

defective in proportion. Unseasoned, unprepared, unselected, badly dried, worse rolled, Paraguayan cigars only avail to tantalise the smoker with the suggested contrast of what they might be and what they are. I myself, for many decades of years a habitual smoker, could easily recognise at once the innate superiority of the wisp-like tobacco roll that no care availed to keep steadily alight for five minutes, over the elegant-looking Brazilian—labelled "Havana"—cigar in my pocket-case; while painfully made aware at the same time of the artifical advantages that rendered the latter preferable for use to the former. The Government that shall introduce a few skilled operatives of the Arroceros factory and the Cagayan tobacco plantations to teach, by example and practice, the arts of tobacco growing and cigar making to Paraguay will deserve a public memorial and a marble statue of the handsomest in Asuncion, as a true benefactor primarily of his country, and indirectly of South America, and the world at large. For what blessing can equal a good cigar?

At present, of all the "mystery," to use an old phrase, of tobacco growing, no less than that of cigar making, the Paraguayans, whose education in this really important regard has been sadly neglected, are practically ignorant; and many were the questions asked me about the cultivation of the plant, the proper manuring of the soil, the harvesting and drying of the leaf, and so forth. For attached, and most justly so, as they are to their own country and its usages, they are by no means incurious as to what is done elsewhere, nor averse to adopt or copy what may be suited to their requirements. Nor are the Japanese themselves apter scholars to useful teaching; though, happily for the Paraguayans, the greater steadiness of their national character would hardly admit of the childish imitativeness and unwise parody that has so much damaged and perverted Japanese improvement of late years.

Of the "yerva" cultivation, for many generations the principal, almost the exclusive, source of Paraguayan revenue, my village friends in the Akái district have not much to say. The *Ilex Paraguayensis* is a shrub of tropical growth, and we are at

present little north of lat. 25°. But I may here remark that the article itself, though still inconsiderable, is not in increasing request, rather the reverse; partly because of the Europeanising mania widely diffused through the adjoining states, and which has included the use, once universal, of *maté* in its anathema of "uncivilised" pronounced on whatever is South American and is not Parisian, be it dress, usage, amusement, dance, music, or whatever else; and partly from the competition of Argentine and Brazilian "yerva," both much inferior in strength and flavour to the Paraguayan, but also cheaper in their respective markets.

For my own part I do not see—climate, soil, and local conditions taken into account—why tea, so successfully cultivated in Northern India and, to a certain extent, in Japan, should not be introduced into, and thrive in, Paraguay also. Every favourable condition, every requisite, seems, to the best of my observation, to be present; and were the experiment made, the chances of success are, I think, far greater than those of failure. I should recommend the hill-ranges—now covered with mere forest—towards the Brazilian frontier as fit ground for a first attempt. The ultimate result would probably be the substitution of tea plantation for that of "yerva" to a considerable extent, to the permanent advantage of the Paraguayan market at all events; the ilex continuing to maintain itself, but on a diminished scale.

Maize, here no longer the stunted, small-eared plant that we see it in Italy or Southern Uruguay, but rivalling in luxuriance and produce the vigorous growths of the Trans-Caucasus and Asia Minor, is a favourite crop; rice also, both the irrigated and the upland variety. Both are pleasing to the eye, the dark glossy green of the Indian corn plant making an effective set-off to the bright emerald of the rice fields. But more graceful than either in form and shape of leaf, though duller in tint, is the "manioca," or, to give it the name best known to European commerce, "tapioca" herb, with its countless little domes of delicate leaves, each on its slender stalk; the root, reduced into flour, is the staple food of the peasants, who make it up with

sugar and yolk of egg into cakes and rolls, very nutritious, but somewhat cloying to a foreign taste. A wider range of cultivation, such as, however, is at present beyond the reach of the half-repeopled land, and a judicious use of the facilities given for washing the pulp by the lavish copiousness of pure running water in sources and streams throughout Paraguay, might easily make of tapioca an important item on the national export list. But orange trees and palms, both native growths, valuable for their produce, though requiring hardly any care on the part of man, are of all others the distinctive features, the ornaments too, of a Paraguayan country landscape, which, taken altogether, comes nearer to the ideal of a habitable Eden, a paradise adapted to man as he is, in this working-day existence of our race, than any other region it has been my fortune to visit in the old world or the new.

Much might be added to the agricultural list just given, but those mentioned are the foremost in interest to the children of the soil. Or perhaps our conversation—for supper is not yet ready, and the tempered coolness of the evening invites us to prolong our out-of-doors *soirée*—wanders to the minerals of the land, unexplored as yet to any serious purpose, though the frequency of chalybeate waters testifies to the abundance of iron in the soil; copper, too, is often met with; gold and silver are talked of, but, fortunately perhaps for the country, little verified. Marbles of every kind, the pure white excepted, could be, but seldom are, quarried in the hills; porcelain clay abounds, and finds a restricted use.

The best product, however, of Paraguay, and that without which all the rest, however varied and precious, would be of little avail, is, to borrow Blake's strangely significant phrase, the "human abstract." That "the Paraguayans are a lazy lot;" that "the men in Paraguay do nothing—all the work is done by women;" that the said men "pass their time in drinking *matè*, smoking cigars, eating, and sleeping;" nay, that "there are hardly any men in Paraguay, nine-tenths of the population being female," with the not illogical corollary, that everything everywhere "in this unfortunate country" is in "a

state of complete demoralisation," I had heard repeated *usque ad satietatem* by Europeans and Americans alike—both, in most instances, absolutely guiltless of any personal experience of Paraguay, or having passed a few days in a hotel at Asuncion at most—before I made my own visit to that country. Hearing, I, as is my wont, neither believed nor disbelieved, but waited the surer evidence of presence and sight. How far this evidence confirmed or contradicted the evil report brought up by others on the land, my readers will, if I have written to any purpose, sufficiently apprehend. In few words, then, the men and women, both of them, and either class within its proper limits of occupation, throughout Paraguay, are as industrious, hard-working, diligent, painstaking, persevering a folk as any I know of; nor are the women more so than the men, nor the men than the women. Of course the traveller will, when visiting the villages during the day hours, see more of the female than of the male sex, because the former, very naturally, stays more at home, the latter is more scattered abroad. That, when resting, men, and women too, drink a good deal of *matè*, or "yerva" rather, I quite admit, but not so much by near as North Europeans do beer and gin, or South Europeans wine; and the Paraguayan drink is, at any rate, not the most harmful on the list. In eating they are assuredly very moderate and simple; that they often take a nap at noon is the necessary result of very early rising, a hot sun by day, and late hours—these, too, the consequence of climate and the delicious night temperature to follow. As to "complete demoralisation," what the phrase may mean in a country where crime is almost unknown, violence unheard of, where the sacredness of a plighted word habitually dispenses with the necessity or even the thought of a written bond, where the conjugal fidelity of the women is such as to be in a manner proverbial, and family ties are as binding as in China itself, where sedition does not exist, *vendetta* has no place, and every one in general minds his own business and that of his family without interfering with his neighbours or the public order and law, I am at an utter loss to comprehend. But if this state of things—and it is that of Paraguay at large—be

"demoralisation," I can only wish that many other countries that I know of, not to mention my own, were equally demoralised too.

Not, however, that all is the Byronic "old Saturn's reign of sugar-candy," even in Paraguay. For though politics, in the generally accepted sense of the word, rarely find place among the preoccupations of a Paraguayan landowner—and all the inhabitants here are landowners, some greater, some less—it cannot be supposed that past revolutions, changes of rulers and governments, a wasting war, a hostile occupation, years of such utter desolation that the nation seemed not prostrate merely but destroyed, have not left behind them memories of bitterness, local and family feuds, party watchwords, party hates. To define or explain these would be to retrace the entire history of the state for at least a century back, a task far beyond the scope of the present writing. Enough for the present, that the two well-known colours which have from præ-Islamitic times downwards ranged the rival elements of Arabia under the red banner of Yemen and the white standard of Nejed, which counter-distinguished the symbolical roses of the longest and most fatal of our own civil wars, and which are yet recognised as badges of civil dissension and war in many South American states, have also, though with special and local significancies omitted here, divided the Paraguayans into "Blancos" or Whites, and "Colorados" or Reds, for aims, primarily and originally ethnico-political, now embodied in family feuds or personal wrongs. Curiously enough in this remote oasis of the world's desert, no less than in the Arabian peninsula, in the Albion of the fifteenth century, and in the sub-littoral America of the present, the red flag has mustered under itself what may best be defined as the distinctively national or patriotic party, while the white has been a signal for extra-national sympathies and alliances—a merely accidental coincidence, yet a remarkable one. Happily for Paraguay, the patriotism of her children, their loyalty to their mother-country is so general, so fervent, that any less national feeling, however symbolised, however disguised, has comparatively but few to represent it, or support; fewest of all in the purely country districts, for example, in Akái.

The last pale streak of sunset has faded in the west, and a silvery gauze of moonlight spreads unstained over the purple darkness of the deep sky, just pierced by the steel blue point of Sirius, or the orange glow of Canopus, now high in mid-heaven, lord of the southern hemisphere. Before us, touched by the deceptive light, the "*luce maligna*," as Virgil with deep meaning calls it, of the large moon, the sharp peaks of Akái stand out in jagged relief against the sky, part black, part edged in glittering silver, as though they were immediately behind and above the village roofs; a startling contrast to the palm and orange groves of the hamlet, really near at hand, but almost lost to view in black shadow. No one is by us now but the "Jefe Politico" or sheriff of the village-town and district; lights glimmer here and there in the house-windows before us; but the grassy square, with its ghostly white church and spectral bell-tower, is lonely as a desert, as silent too.

"That mountain," said our host, and pointed to the strange ridges of Akái, "that mountain bears an evil name throughout the neighbourhood. Goblins of malignant will, shapes as of men, but præter-human in size and horrible to sight, are said to frequent its slopes, and fires that leave no trace by day are seen there at night." And he went on to recount, as having lately occurred, a ghastly story; how a party of benighted wayfarers had, only a short time before, taken up their quarters in a copse on the mountain side; how after midnight they were awakened by a near glare through the trees; how two or three—I am not sure of the number—from among them boldly ventured to find out the cause, and after threading their way through the thicket came on a small stony depression, bare, but girt by brushwood, and in the midst of it a great fire, fiercely burning, and tended by giant figures, black and hideous, who warned them off with threatening gestures from nearer approach; how when they on their return told the tale to their companions in the wood, one of the band, a lad of eighteen or so, seized as it appeared by a sudden madness, declared he would go whatever might betide and fetch fire from the blaze; how the others tried to detain him in vain; he broke from them and disappeared in the

brushwood: how after a while they heard his screams, and forced their way with difficulty through the thicket to the little rock-strewn hollow just as the first dawn was breaking; how they found no trace of fire on the ground, nor any living semblance or thing, only their unfortunate comrade, horribly disfigured and burnt in body and limbs, who told how the goblins had seized him, thrown him into the mid-blaze, and held him there; and having told this, died in agony before the sun rose.

Stories, of this kind especially, lose nothing in the telling; the adventure was referred to wayfarers from a distance and to a date of some months back; and to inquire into the accuracy of the narrative, in whole or in detail, would have been very superfluous labour. Still it is notable that the tale should be, so our friend said, one of many similar in kind, and all relating to the same neighbourhood and region. Can these strange tales be the distorted and transformed traditions of volcanic outbursts, long since quiescent? Or may they be due to some phenomena of inflammable vapours escaping from time to time, and bursting into light, or even fire, as atmospheric conditions may determine? That subterraneous heat is still actively, though invisibly, at work here was evidenced this very year, when, on the 18th October last, just a month or so before my visit to the place, a loud rumbling noise was heard from underground about ten o'clock in the morning, and all the villages of the district, to a distance of ten to fifteen miles round the mountain of Akái, from which—that is, of course, from under which—all agreed that both the noise and the shock proceeded, were suddenly and violently shaken; some said, by a single concussion, as if artillery had been discharged close by, others told of a longer continued and vibrating movement, but all assigned the same hour and instant; all too heard the noise, though, it seems, with some difference of clearness and duration. Nothing of the kind, said our informant, had ever within man's memory occurred before. However, in the fact of the earthquake shock, and the sensation that it proceeded from Akái as a centre, everyone agreed; it did not reach beyond this seemingly volcanic Eifel-

like region, nor was anything of the kind observed in Asuncion then or later. But that in the fact itself may lie an indication of what the weird tales of Akái and its night fires point to, seems to me not impossible, not improbable perhaps.

The teller of the tale was himself a remarkable man; one of those who are in a manner the type and compendium of the nation they belong to, summing up in themselves alike its physical and its mental characteristics, its merits and its defects. Spanish, like the greater number of Paraguayans by name, and in part by origin, he bore in his dark complexion, nearly beardless features, and slight frame, evidence of a considerable admixture, more than half, probably, of Guarani blood. A mere boy, almost a child in years, he had joined the national army soon after the outbreak of the unequal war in 1865, and had been present in almost every one of the land battles where his countrymen, victors or vanquished, in life or death, held their own without thought of flight or quarter against the triple alliance of their foes. Not even then, when Humaita was lost, Angostura taken, Asuncion sacked, and the last army—the few fighters whom what yet survived of Paraguay could muster—had been surrounded and slaughtered almost to a man, did the lad abandon his cause and his leader, but accompanied the ill-fated and, by this time, half-insane despot during the whole of those miserable months, when gradually driven towards the northern frontier he carried on an obstinate but useless guerilla war against the invaders of his country, till, hemmed in and at bay, he turned on his Brazilian pursuers on the banks of the Aquidaban, and, fighting to the last, died, with his eldest son Panchito at his side, more nobly than he had lived. Such of his few companions—they were not above three hundred in all—as had yet physical strength enough left to make any kind of resistance, died almost to a man like their chief; a few, unable either to fight or to fly, were made prisoners by the enemy; but others, disarmed though not wholly disabled, and resolved not to submit themselves as captives to the abhorred Brazilians, escaped to the woods and the yet uncivilised Indian tribes of the further

mountains, where they remained sharing the huts and leading the life of their half-barbarous but faithful hosts and protectors, till another year had seen what remained of Paraguay—after her conquerors had partitioned the spoils—free of foreign occupation, and allowed them to return to where their homes had been, and to the fortunes of their country, then seemingly at its last gasp. Of these refugees, of Cerro-Corà and Aquidaban, was my friend the narrator of the tale. Well aware, and often eye-witness of the cruelties and crimes that stained the latter days of Salano Lopez, he yet spoke of him with loyal respect, almost with affection, as the head and representative of the national cause; and would gladly, he said, yet give his blood and his life for his former leader; though unable to share, contrary to the evidence of his senses, in the still extant popular belief that refuses to admit the reality of Lopez's death, and hopefully awaits his reappearance from some hiding-place in the mountains even now.

From talk like this we are summoned by the mistress of the house, who is, also, like Milton's Eve, *ex-officio* chief cook, to our dinner, in the materials of which vegetables, maize, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, beans, &c., bear a larger proportion than they would in the almost exclusively carnivorous regions further South. Table service, cooking, and so forth, are all more or less after Spanish fashion; the wines are Spanish too, and good. But Paraguayan appetite is not nice as to delicacy of food: and the gastronomic skill attributed by our great poet to his Eden hostess is decidedly wanting in the ministrations of this earthly paradise;—a want, it may be, preferable where health is concerned, to the observance. Anyhow, there is plenty on the board, and of sound quality too. In the country districts the women, as a rule, take their meals apart from the men, not on any compulsion, but because they themselves prefer it so; in Asuncion a more European style prevails.

Dinner, or supper, over, our host proposes that we should adjourn to a *baile*, or ball, the one favourite diversion of Paraguay, which has been got up to do honour to our arrival in one or other of the most spacious houses of the village, or, very

possibly, in the "Jefatura," or government offices themselves. We cross the square, and find a large gathering of men, women and children—for early hours are no part of childhood's diurnal discipline here, any more than elaborate dress—some, as direct participators in the amusement within, others, as lookers on, without the brightly lighted-up building, and the band—no Paraguayan village is without its musical band, all much of a pattern—consisting of a harp, a clarionet, a violin or guitar, a fife, a drum, and very likely a tambourine or a triangle, in a group near the entrance, already engaged in tuning up and preluding to the music of the dance. The room, or rooms, within are or are not laid down with mats, as the case may be, and are well illuminated; chairs and benches are ranged against the walls, and doors and windows all wide open to the night insure coolness, spite of the flaring lamps and gathered crowd.

The women, dressed in Paraguayan fashion, with the long white "tupoi," or sacque, deeply embroidered round the borders, and often fringed with the beautiful home-made lace of the country, with silk skirts, or brightly-coloured petticoats, and a broad coloured sash, some of them wearing slippers, others barefooted—no harm where feet are so pretty as theirs—are seated around, waiting each her turn of the dance. Their stock of Spanish is apt to be limited; and any fine speeches which you naturally wish to make them had best, for fear of misapprehension, be made in Guarani; the smile with which you will be rewarded will quite repay the trouble of learning a phrase or two. The men are, some of them, especially if anyhow "official," in European afternoon or evening dress, which, I need hardly remark, is no advantage; some, however, are attired more becomingly in country style—ponchos, girdles, loose trousers, silver chainlets, and so on; the linen of all is scrupulously clean and white. The assembly is almost exclusively made up of small farmers, graziers, and peasants from the village and its neighbourhood, with their families; but rich or poor, official or private, whatever be the social class they belong to, no difference is perceptible in manner or bearing; the same easy, though deferential politeness, the same freedom alike from obtrusive

forwardness or awkward shyness, characterises each and every one, whatever be the rank or sex, in speech and intercourse; at least they are gentlemen and ladies all in the fullest sense of those so often misappropriated terms.

The dances are either merely of the pan-European kind—quadrilles, waltzes, polkas, mazurkas, and lancers—or of, I think, Andalusian origin, though sometimes denominated "Paraguayan"; the *ciclo*, the *media caña* (a great favourite, and very lively), the Montenero, and some variations introduced into the *contre-dansa*, belong apparently to this class. Whether the aboriginal Indians or Guaranis had any dances or music, properly speaking, of their own, and antecedent to the Spanish conquest, I do not know; but from the entire absence of any traces of such among the Paraguayans, I should think not.

Cigars, cigarettes, sweets, refreshments, drinks, among which last *cana*, the rum of the country, comes foremost, are freely distributed in the intervals of the dances, and the ball is kept up till morning light. Of all social amusements, for a minimum of expense and trouble, and a maximum of real enjoyment, commend me to a Paraguayan village ball. The cynicism of Prosper Mérimée himself could not have stood proof against it, and must have for once admitted that even for a *désillusioné* society may still have some attractions, life some pleasures.

Beautiful rather than grand, continually varying, but without violent or sudden contrasts, the scenery which I traversed from village to village and day by day was of a kind better adapted to sight than to description; besides, the account already given of its general character and products may serve, at all events to those who have ever visited sub-tropical lands, to fill up the outlines of my sketch more truly than direct word-painting could do. Yet there are two features rarely wanting in a Paraguayan landscape that require some more special, though brief, mention: the forests and the lakes. The former, dispersed in patches amid the cultivated lands, and thickly gathered on the hill-ranges to the east, are of singular beauty; and the trees,

though inferior in dimensions and height to the giants of the tropical zone, have the advantage over them in greater variety of foliage and form of growth—now resembling the oak, now the beech, now the ash, with interspaces between them of bright greensward, unchoked by the rank bush of hotter climates; while a sufficient admixture of palms, some fan-leaved, others feathery, with bamboos, twining creepers, and orchids, give what a European might call an exotic tint to the picture. Many of these trees supply timber of great value: such is that of the mahogany and cedar, red or yellow; of the *lapacho* and *quebracho*, both hard as iron, and more durable; of the *timbo*, a tall, straight trunk, much used for canoe-building; of the *urundei*, good for house-timbers and ships; of the *jacarundá*, with its ornamental yellow grain; of the *palo di rosa*, or rosewood, and fifty more, all destined to no unimportant part in the commerce of the future—whenever that shall be. The boughs of many of these trees are wide-spreading and fantastically contorted, the leafage generally small, prettily serrated, and of a dark glossy green, agreeable to the eye.

As to the lakes, they are liberally distributed over the whole of Paraguay, and vary in size and character from small marshy pools of little depth, to the wide water-sheets of Ipoa and Ipecarai, each considerably exceeding in size any of our own English lakes, and proportionately deep; both belong to the central district through which I travelled. Each of them has, in popular tradition, a story attached to it, telling of its origin; that of Lake Ipoa, as related to me, was not dissimilar to the tradition memorialised in the Dead Sea, though fortunately the waters of Ipoa are not salt, but sweet and abounding in fish. The Ipecarai lake is, on the contrary, said to be brackish. But the shores of both are lovely, gently shelving in most places, and clothed with alternating wood and meadow down to the silvery mirror's edge. These lakes are the favourite resorts of water-fowl—wild-duck, and teal in particular—in shoals resembling floating islands from a distance. Partridges and snipe are the principal winged game by land; I heard of bustards too, but saw none; ostriches, or, more properly, emus, abound everywhere.

Of four-footed game there is plenty too by plain and forest, from lions, tigers, panthers, and deer, down to hares and rabbits, besides other South American quadrupeds—all declared by the peasants "good to eat," but tastes differ.

How far the varied and ever-lovely country in which they live, the "pleasure situate in hill and dale," nowhere more lavishly bestowed by nature than here—the abundance of wood-flowers and fruits, the fern-margined fountains and sparkling streams, the stately trees and deep waving meadows, and all the perennial beauties that make of Paraguay the wonder and the delight of all who visit it, how far, I say, these things may have contributed towards making up the peculiarly cheerful, contented, genial character of those who live among them, I cannot tell; theories of the kind are the veriest card-houses, lightly set up, as lightly thrown down. Yet I have noticed, not once, but often, and in many regions wide apart, how much more serious, more unexpansive, more sombre, in fact, more unamiable a type of dweller is generally found in open, treeless, objectless lands of monotonous downs or wide level, whether such be under an Asian, an African, or a European sky—whether the denizens or the landscape be agricultural, as in Lower Egypt, or pastoral, as in the Dobruja and the Eastern Steppes, or mixed, as in Holland; the absence in man of what may be termed the ornamental side of human nature is still the same. For the habitual sight of beauty in some form or other, and its frequent contact seem to be necessary to the development of the beautiful in man's nature itself; and where the surroundings are bare and dull, the inner life is apt to share in the bareness and dulness of its dwelling-place. It is not only exceptional natures, as a Giorgione or a Turner, that grow incorporate with, and reproduce in themselves, the scenes of their childhood and youth—all men, I think, do it more or less; and the advantages enjoyed by a high-born child, carefully brought up, and supplied with every opportunity for the fulfilment of every innate power, over the poverty-hampered, stunted, starved child of destitute parents, are not more than those which the native of a fair land, a bright sky, and a genial climate possesses over the offspring of a harsh heaven and an

unlovely earth. Nature, like too many other mothers, has her favourite children, and the Paraguayans are in this respect, the Benjamins of her family.

My riding-tour, during which I visited four out of the twenty-three districts into which Paraguay is now divided, being over, I returned, not without some regret, to Asuncion; and thence, after a short interval allowed to the kindness of my hospitable entertainers, re-embarked on the main river for an up-stream voyage of about two hundred miles more to Concepcion, the chief town of northern Paraguay, situated just within the tropic of Capricorn, and the principal centre and depot of the *matè* or "yerva" traffic. But of this section of the river, its villages and its scenery, also of the "yerva" groves, or forests rather, I must defer the description till another opportunity.

Much too I have omitted, even in what concerns that section of the country which I have to a certain extent described, not because unimportant or wanting in interest, but as reaching too far beyond the limits of my present scope, and fitter for a complete work on Paraguay as it was, or is, than for a slight sketch of the superficial impressions made by a few weeks passed within the territory. The form and tenure of the actual government, as established in 1870, and maintained, at any rate, to the letter, since then; the condition of the army—that army which not many years since, alone and unassisted, held the invading forces of half South America at bay; of the navy, whose small wooden steamers so long made good the river defence against nearly double the number of gunboats and ironclads; the newly-created judicial organisation and legal tribunals; the position of the clergy; the system of popular education, the elementary schools established throughout the country; all these are, I think, better here passed over altogether, than touched on after a slight and possibly misleading fashion. Nor have I, for similar reasons, said anything about the various co-operative enterprises —agricultural, pastoral, or industrial—undertaken of late years, chiefly by foreigners, within the Paraguayan territory, with varying failure or success; nor about the yet "uncivilised," that is un-Europeanised or neo-Americanised Indian tribes, some

scattered through the riverine districts and the adjoining villages, "among them, but not of them;" others keeping more apart, and tenanting the mountains and forests of the east and north towards the Brazilian frontier; but all on good terms with the Paraguayans as such, though little inclined, it seems, to modify their own ancestral habits or occupations.

Leaving these things aside for the present, enough has, I think, been written here to show that Paraguay, no less than her sister Republics of the south, is a country with a future; that the Paraguayan nationality, though reduced to scarce a third of its original numbers, and left houseless and homesteadless on a desolated land, has yet, in a few years of comparative peace and quiet, already sufficiently, thanks to its intense and inherent vitality, recovered itself enough to bring a large portion of its territory under cultivation, to restock its pastures with cattle, and, best of all, its villages with contented, happy, and increasing families—the surest pledge of complete restoration and lasting prosperity in time to come. Assertions like those, made and repeated but fifteen years ago, by writers of the kind alluded to in the earlier part of this Essay, that the Paraguayans "exist no longer," that "their destruction was inevitable" that they were "the tree which will bring forth no fruit," and should accordingly be in due course "hewn down and cast into the fire;" they being "incapable of civilisation;" winding up with the Cassandra predictions that, "the foreigners whom they distrusted and despised will till the ground which they abandoned to tares and brambles, and enjoy the fair heritage which they were unworthy to possess;" that, "the Teuton and the Anglo-Saxon will soon fill the void," or, more wonderful yet, that the Paraguayans themselves will "perforce ask Brazil to take the little she has left of their habitable territory, and annex it as the smallest province of the empire," show very little knowledge in those who have uttered them either of the country or of its inhabitants. That the Paraguayan nation has by no means ceased to exist, that neither its past, that of a state which, weighed in the balance of a six years' struggle, proved almost a counterpoise for the greatest empire and the greatest Republic of the south con-

jointly, nor its present with its vigorous outcome of new energy, new life, bear either of them the most distant resemblance to barren fig-trees, tares, brambles, or any other combustibles of the biblical list, are facts that whoever cares to visit the land as I visited it may easily assure himself no less completely than I did. As to Paraguayan civilisation, he will find it what I found and have described it; and he must be hard to satisfy if it does not content him. With regard to "Teuton" and "Anglo-Saxon" immigrants, by whom I conjecture Germans and Englishmen to be meant, they and their labours are, and always will be, welcomed, protected, encouraged in Paraguay; but I do not foresee any likelihood of their superseding the vigorous race that forms the bulk of the existent nationality, nor would it be desirable that they should. Far better, as far more within the compass of probability, that they should, by identifying their interests with those of the land of their adoption, contribute a fresh and most valuable element of industry and perseverance to the born children of the soil. As to Brazil, in particular, the only favour Paraguay has to ask of her is to be a just and friendly neighbour; more than that neither she nor any other state will, I trust, have the unwisdom to attempt, nor would the Paraguayans, betide what might, for an instant allow. Paraguay is yet herself; and her sons and daughters are yet, as they ever have been, true to themselves and to her. *Esto perpetua!*

ALKAMAH'S CAVE: A STORY OF NEJD.

Unlike the preceding Essays, this story, originally published in 'Macmillan's Magazine,' 1874–5, and the substance of which I picked up from Arab recitals whilst myself an Arab among Arabs, is not in form a narration of my own personal experiences, but of those of others. Yet as it was in course of my own wanderings that I obtained so intimate a knowledge of the Arabian Peninsula and its inhabitants as to be able to pronounce with assurance on the representative genuineness of the story and its facts, both in the main and in detail, I think "Ulysses" fairly entitled to include it among the results of his own diversified sojournings; and for this reason I republish it here. And should any one among my readers question the generosity of sentiment and self-sacrifice of deed here recorded as excessive or improbable, I can only say that he knows little of Arab character or Arab life.

PART I.

IT has been remarked, and, I believe, correctly so, that the music of semi-barbarous, or, to put it more courteously, semi-civilized races, is more often sad than cheerful in its character: Welsh and Irish melodies are sometimes cited in proof. But it is equally observable that, of the romance-stories in vogue at this stage of society, those stories that, taken in conjunction with music and with religious legend, constitute the poetical expression of the national mind, the greater number by far are melancholy in their course, or their ending, or both. And, whatever may be the law elsewhere, this is at least undoubtedly the case with the tales that from time immemorial have helped to while away Arab evenings, sometimes by the encampment fire, sometimes by the household hearth.

Not but that we occasionally come across—and it is quite a consolation when it occurs—a genuine Arab narrative, winding up in the approved three-volume novel fashion; all the bad

people being killed off, or otherwise got rid of, and all the good ones rewarded, more or less, with the conventional sugar-plums of fiction; while the hero and heroine marry, and, in spite of polygamy (which is mostly ignored in these stories), live happy ever after. But romance of this roseate hue is the exception; much oftener the sombre tints predominate. As to the well-known "Thousand and one Nights," in which melancholy is rare, and catastrophic mishap still rarer, they belong to a wholly different state of society, namely to the town and court of Bagdad, at that time an Imperial capital, and the centre of an organized civilization. But the genuine imaginings of the popular Arab mind, not on the semi-Persian shores of the Tigris, but in its own native lands, Nejd, Hejaz, or Yemen, are mostly not those of cheerfulness and success, but of sadness and misfortune. This is a psychological phenomenon for which many reasons might doubtless be assigned, but to discuss them would lead too far; suffice for the present that the fact is so.

In the very heart of Arabia, among the rugged sierras of Yemamah, south of Nejd, there exists a small and quiet valley, so shut in on every side by precipitous walls of rock that those who have threaded the long winding gulley that leads to it may wonder, as they stand within the enclosure, how they ever got in, and how they are to get out again. Black splintered crags hem in the view all round; and the deep blue of the sky overhead looks as hopeless as the vault of a prison. The soil that forms the valley floor is sandy, thinly sprinkled with pale grass and thorny shrubs; the rocks around are absolutely bare. At the further end of the glen, where the ground-slope leans somewhat up against the sheer black cliff, there opens in its side a dark overarching hollow, that gives entrance to a spacious cavern within the crag. It is untenanted by man, yet no wild beast has made its lair there; for the spot, though seemingly destined by nature for utter loneliness, is in fact often visited, and many a traveller in Yemamah turns aside from his road to visit the valley and the cavern of which he has heard tell in story as the Cave of Alkamah.

He who gave the place its name came from far to seek it. Alkamah was born and bred, not in this mountainous region of Arabia, but among the open lands full two hundred miles distant to the north, in the little town of Roweydah, where his family, who belonged to the celebrated Howazin tribe, had, it was said, lived for centuries before. But in countries where there is no social change, chronology is apt to be imperfect or wholly deficient. Roweydah, like most of the isolated villages of Nejd that do not lie near any of the main caravan tracks—though it is, of course, so far as its inhabitants are concerned, a little heart of ever-beating and ever-varying life—is in its general features and aspect not more altered from its original self than are, for instance, the dry skeletons of the Pyramids or Luxor, from which life and movement have so long since departed. With them time has stood still; here it has continued to flow, but in a circle.

The town, for it is dignified with the name, though the sum total of its inhabitants, great and small, does not quite come up to 4,000 souls, looks as if it had grown spontaneously out of the ground on which it stands: or as if it were itself an original formation and natural part of the landscape about it, nor could any more vary than the plain and the hill. A deep, but dry, ditch, crossed here and there by broad earthen causeways, leading to the town gates; and within its circle grey fortress walls of brick, unbaked, except by the daily fire of the fierce sun streaming down them; round half-towers flanking the gates, or placed at intervals along the walls; the whole resembling a schoolboy's imaginary Troy or Antium, as drawn on the page margin of a Livy or a Homer, rather than a real fortification. Inside these quaint defences, a maze of houses, grey and earth-built also, most of them only one story high, a few two, with square outlines, and flat parapeted roofs, scattered in purposeless irregularity among high-walled court-yards, and intervening clusters of orchard trees and palms, with dark foliage, all glistening and sleeping in the sun. Something like a gap among the roof-lines indicates the situation of the market-place, and the tortuous course of the two or three principal streets.

Such has Roweydah been, ever since the first hands, long since crumbled with their very memory into forgotten dust, traced its rough outlines; and such it probably will be, when the hand that now transfers those outlines to description, is wasted to dust also. Nor are they more changed than their surroundings from what they were in past times. The tall, white-garmented, brown-cloaked figures that, switch in hand, stroll slowly and gravely along the streets; nor has any freak of fashion varied the trailing dark-blue dresses of the women, and their veils half drawn over their faces, more often to be met with inside the town circuit than the men; nor the brown half or wholly naked children that play in the sand before the doors.

One of these children was, in his day, Alkamah. His father's house—a spacious one for Roweydah, since it contained four private apartments, three up stairs and one on the ground-floor, besides a guest-room of dimensions befitting the noble birth and corresponding hospitality of its owner, with a courtyard in front—stood near to, but within, the town walls, by one of the gates. To Alkamah's father, too, belonged the large garden, with its five hundred palm-trees, on the further side of the town ditch. In the centre of this garden was a well, out of which a pair of bullocks, slowly pacing up and down an inclined slope, drew the brimming leathern buckets that splashed their contents half into the wooden trough that distributed the waters to the inclosure, half back again into the cool dark hollow of the cistern.

With this well young Alkamah's first childish remembrances had much to do. At its edge he used to sit for hours, watching the sparkling drops as they fell, and listening to their tinkling plash in the water below; till, much to his disgust, the one or the other of his elder brothers, for he had two, would come up, swinging his stick, and send the little fellow off to make himself useful by looking after the sheep on the hill-side behind the garden, or fetching something for the household from one of the twenty-three shops that composed the entire market-place of Roweydah.

But among the playmates of his own age in the back streets,

or with the shouting crowds of dusky imps, who on a warm moony night would leap, run, dance, fight, and make uproar of all kinds on the pebbly plain outside the town, young Alkamah was seldom to be found. A serious, silent child, he cared little for the society of other children, and took slight interest in their games. But he was an unwearied listener to tales of wild adventure, of love and war, especially if accompanied by poetical recitals, whenever the elder townsmen who assembled thus to pass their time in the market-place or the guest-room allowed him—a favour not always accorded to one so young—to take a place in their circle.

His father, Aamir, was an active, though now an elderly man, for he was somewhat on the wrong side of sixty, rough and ready, whose principal occupation when not looking after his camel herds and flocks, or, more rarely, his gardens, was the harrying of his neighbours after the good old Arab fashion. His two elder sons, Sa'ad and Sa'eed, were growing up dutiful imitators of the paternal ways and doings; but old Aamir would often speak depreciatingly of his youngest born, whom he opined to be little better than a girl, a mere article of house furniture, and like enough to grow up a milksop. Nor did Alkamah rank much higher in his brothers' estimate. Only his mother, Naïleh, who saw little of her two other boys, and who had no daughter of her own in the house to keep her company, was less disposed to find fault with the lad's quiet demeanour and love of home, qualities very unusual for his sex and age, and which served to keep him away from out-of-doors associates, and consequently more with her. Besides Alkamah was a dutiful son, and really fond of his mother; though to other women, even the prettiest and the youngest, he appeared, at this period of his life, strangely indifferent.

It is true that—to advance matters a little—he made no open objection when, at fifteen years of age, he was betrothed by his parents in due form to a fourth cousin of his, Fareedah by name, a good-looking girl in the opinion of all the neighbours, and, which was even more to the point in the judgment of the same tribunal, with a goodly portion to her dower. But though

the pre-ordained couple had repeatedly met, both within the town walls and without them, and though Fareedah had more than once ingeniously manœuvred her destined bridegroom into lending her a hand at milking, or carrying a water-pitcher for her, and the like, yet she had never had the satisfaction of seeing him, if but once, turn back his head to look after her when they had separated. The fact was that Alkamah, though by no means bearish or unsociable so long as he was actually in his cousin's company, was in the habit of forgetting everything about her the moment she was out of his sight.

Love, however, although a desirable, is by no means an indispensable prerequisite for marriage in Arabia, any more than in other countries. Hence the families on either side in this affair did not look on the matter as the less a settled one, because the two principals in it, or one of them at least, showed no very particular eagerness for ratifying the bargain.

Meanwhile, time went on, and Alkamah, as he advanced in years, falsified to a great extent his father's uncomplimentary predictions, by proving himself active and energetic enough, though it was still after a fashion of his own. Already, when turned of sixteen, he was a first-rate horseman; and by eighteen he could use both spear and sword with a dexterity not inferior to the best of his clan; while in patient endurance of heat, cold, thirst, hunger, and fatigue, he equalled or surpassed his elders, in whose distant, and sometimes dangerous, excursions after stray camels and the like, on doubtful, or even hostile ground, he was always ready, when called on, to take a share. And yet by these accomplishments, however highly valued by others, he himself seemed to set little store; nor had he ever sought an opportunity to make the ordinary, and, in Arab opinion, the proper use of them, in marauding, wounding, or killing his fellows; or, though of undoubted courage, shown any partiality to fighting for fighting's sake. His greatest pleasure was to be alone; he would often absent himself for days together from the town, without giving any one notice as to where he was going; and when he returned home again, it was not easy to learn from him either where he had been, or what he had been about. Indeed,

there would have been little to tell, for he had been nowhere, and done nothing in particular, only enjoyed his solitude. "He will become a poet," said some of his tribesmen; while others inclined to the idea that he was under some influence from the "Jann," or spirits of the waste. His habitual taciturnity might afford ground for the latter conjecture, and his remarkable eloquence, nearly allied to poetry, when he did speak, for the former.

His mother, however—for his father, occupied with his own affairs, and comparatively seldom within the walls of the town, still seldomer at home, troubled himself very little about the matter—divined with truer instinct that the tall, handsome, dark-eyed, long-haired, silent lad either was already in love, or would soon be so. But with whom? Not with poor Fareedah certainly; nor, for whatever signs and tokens could indicate, with any other special maiden of the town or clan. Hence arose in the maternal breast a justifiable apprehension lest the existing or possible object of his first affections might be found among the girls of some strange, perhaps unfriendly tribe, a thing to be deprecated on all accounts, yet occasionally taking place, and thus giving rise to many and complicated difficulties, and even sometimes to bloodshed among the susceptible and purse-proud Arabs.

To anticipate some entanglement of this sort, the best plan was undoubtedly to hasten on the family match which had been previously determined, and to which Alkamah for his part had as yet manifested no distinct repugnance; marriage, being, as old Naïleh observed, perhaps from her own bygone experience, the surest cure for capricious love, and children a weighty counterbalance to an unsettled disposition.

Unfortunately, as the result proved, both for her son and herself, Alkamah's mother delayed the execution of her prudent project from week to week, and from month to month, chiefly owing to her own misplaced fondness, that shrank back when the moment came from carrying out a measure which could not but in some degree separate her from the son in whose company she found her chiefest pleasure. And while she hesitated and

temporized, fate, as it often will do when trifled with overlong, took the matter out of her hands and into its own.

It was yet early summer in Nejd, but the more southerly lands of Yemen were already parched by the increasing heat; and their pastoral inhabitants began, according to their immemorial usage, to move northwards towards regions still comparatively cool and green, bringing with them their numerous herds of camels and flocks of brindled sheep, to pasture wherever either some old inter-tribal treaty or alliance, or custom, assigned them space. Among these nomad clans of the south, that of Morad had always been on terms of special friendship with the Howazin brotherhood, whether townsmen or Bedouins; and this year particular circumstances, needless to recount here, connected with the preliminaries of the annual migration north, directed a large detachment of the Morad wanderers to the grazing grounds which belonged to and lay in the immediate vicinity of Roweydah.

They came, a moving village, 200 tents at least, men, women, children, and camels, the last between 2,000 and 3,000 in number, besides a large drove of sheep, and about 150 horses, for the clan was a wealthy one. The elders of Howazin and the principal inhabitants of Roweydah went out to meet their new guests while yet at a couple of days' distance from the town, partly the better to make sure of the friendliness of their intentions, and partly to assign them the limits within which their flocks and herds might pasture unmolested.

After much bargaining and parley, everything was settled to the satisfaction of both parties. The camels were turned loose to browse their fill on bush and grass, while the horses were picketed and the tents pitched in irregular lines at the foot of a slope, a mile or rather more south of the town, near a group of little wells in the hollow. Before a week was over there had sprung up too in front of the tents a kind of fair, where bread, dates, cheese, milk, butter, and sometimes meat, besides a few weapons, some articles of dress, travelling gear, wooden bowls curiously carved, and other implements for use or ornament were bought and sold. Hither many of the townspeople resorted

daily; while the new arrivals, for their part, paid frequent visits of curiosity, idleness, or, in their loitering fashion, of business to Roweydah. Thus the space that lay between the gardens and the camp was constantly speckled by comers and goers, amongst them, as was natural, the women from either side, some for purposes of sale or barter, others for sheer gossip's sake, were not the least numerous, nor the least noisy.

One of these visitants to the camp was Alkamah's mother, Naïleh, who, being of a sociable turn, had soon formed an acquaintance with several, and a friendship with some of the women of Morad, till the result was an almost daily intercourse between them. The distance from the one place to the other was inconsiderable, but the way was in one or two places so much shut in by the rounded hillocks between which it wound, as not to be wholly secure for a solitary woman, in case she should thereabouts fall in with any of the camp or town stragglers, whom the seclusion of the spot might possibly tempt to impertinence in one form or other. Accordingly Naïleh generally took the precaution of providing herself for the road with two or more companions of her own sex, and usually of her own kindred.

But one morning it so happened that none of these were available; and the good lady was sitting alone within doors, disappointed of her excursion, and somewhat out of humour, when Alkamah entered the house. His mother had soon told him the reason of her solitude and annoyance, and he at once offered to remove it by taking on himself the duty of escort. His proposal was in every way welcome; she hastened to put on her over-dress and sandals, he girt himself with a light sword, and the two set out together from the town.

The sun had been up a couple of hours, but the air was still cool and pleasant when they reached the tent where Naïleh designed visiting. It was a large one, pitched not far from the centre of the encampment. The door curtain was closed, a sign that no one of the male sex was within; but as Naïleh stood without, and clapped her hands, her friend, the mistress of the dwelling, came out to receive and welcome her. She was herself

a stout middle-aged woman, of a cheerful eye, and who, judging by the general turn of her features, and the delicacy of her hands and feet, must once have been a beauty, before advancing years and frequent exposure to the hot sun and wind had deprived her of her claims to that title. Taking Alkamah's mother by the hand she led her in; Alkamah himself would have willingly remained outside, and indeed had already turned to go, but to allow a visitor to depart without partaking of some refreshment would have been a reproach on Morad hospitality, and he too, after a little hesitation, entered the tent.

A light reed mat, platted in red and white, was soon spread on the dry sand that constituted the floor, and here Alkamah and his mother placed themselves, while their hostess, as soon as the first customary greetings had passed, made a sign to her daughter, the only other person in the tent, and who, when the strangers came in, had remained seemingly without noticing them, seated in a farther corner, and engaged in some household work or other. The girl now rose, and went into an inner compartment, whence she soon reappeared, bearing with her a large bowl of fresh camel's milk, which she set down on the mat before them. Next she fetched from the same recess a dish of pressed dates, those of last year's crop, for the fruit of the present season had not as yet come in. While she thus performed her part, she threw her veil aside from her face, partly the better to see to what she was about, partly, it might be, to obtain a clearer view of the young man, their guest, whose presence, however, she in a manner ignored, by paying apparently her entire attention to his mother.

Alkamah looked up, and saw before him a bright-eyed graceful girl, with a smiling face and long black hair, but he was not just then particularly struck or affected by the sight—a pretty girl is no rarity in Nejd. Besides, his attention was soon, it must be said, occupied by the bowl of milk, from which, when his mother had taken her share, he drained a full draught: and next by the dish of clotted sweetness set before him, for the dates were of Nejran growth, and much superior in flavour to the ordinary produce of Roweydah.

According to Arab usage, the girl herself stood by and waited on the strangers during their short meal, but said nothing. When the extemporised breakfast was over, Selma—for that was her name—began to remove the dishes, and lightly swept the mat where they had been placed. Alkamah rose to go; at this movement of his Selma naturally looked at him: but neither she nor—which would have been more to the purpose—her mother gave either sign or hint to imply that they wished him to remain longer. Only Naïleh begged her son to return to the tent on the morning of the third day, in order to escort her back to town, for she intended to stay not that night only, but the following one also, in the camp.

While on his way home, Alkamah met some men of the Morad clan, acquaintances of his own. They asked him from whence he was coming; he told them, and inquired in return the name and circumstances of the owner of the tent he had just left; for filial respect had hindered him from putting any questions on the subject to his mother; and she, whose mind had been then somewhat preoccupied, had not thought of telling him. He now learnt that the elderly dame, his hostess, was the wife of one Malik, a man wealthy, as wealth is reckoned among Bedouins, and high born, being of the purest Yemenee, or Kahtanee descent. Also that he had four sons, all pretty men, and of fighting celebrity, and three daughters, two of whom were absent, married to householders on the confines of Yemen. From all which Alkamah might, if he cared, without the trouble of any compromising questions, conjecture for himself that the girl he had just seen was the third and youngest daughter; her name he had already learnt incidentally from her mother when addressing her.

Details of knowledge, communicated shortly after a meeting, often serve to fix in the mind an image that would else have soon been effaced; and Alkamah, who was then on the point of more than half forgetting the morning's incidents at the camp, now, after this conversation, recalled them every one with singular distinctness. He walked on; but before entering the town, turned aside into his father's palm-garden, to rest a little

by the well. It was noon; neither bullocks nor gardener were at work; and Alkamah had the place, his favourite haunt, all to himself.

Not, however, entirely so; for, as he laid himself down in the cool shade, intending to doze, the likeness of Selma presented itself again and again before him with a strange and automatic persistence. There was no cause; a pretty face, certainly, a well-balanced form; that was all; he had seen fifty such before and none of them had impressed itself on his memory for an hour; why should this one now? Yet somehow, and almost to his annoyance, it did so. To divert his thoughts he gazed into the well; and the face of Selma seemed to look at him out of the dark mirror; he turned his eyes on the palm-trees around, and it was as though she was somewhere close by peeping from between them. He was puzzled, and could not understand it. Had he analyzed his own feelings, he might perhaps have discovered a cause; and have learnt that the deepest impressions are not always those which are the most consciously received. But Alkamah was an Arab, and not much given to self-analysis; besides, few youths are so, whether Arab or other, at eighteen. So he resigned himself, and let his fancyings run on, without troubling himself about the mystery of their whence and whither, more than about his own or that of mankind in general, till the change in the direction of the chequered shadows around warned him that noon had long past. Then he got up, and went into the market-place; and before nightfall had almost rid himself of the haunting memory, though it visited him again faintly just as he was dropping off to sleep.

On the morning of the third day he returned, according to the appointment with his mother, to the Morad camp. As he approached the tents he observed an unusual crowd in front of and amongst them; the space was full of men and women, all in their holiday dresses; silver and gold glittered, here on a sword-scabbard, there on a rich head-ornament; embroidered cloaks, striped silks, gay and voluminous girdles, bright and shining hues, came and went like the colours on a flower-field waved by the wind. But when from amidst all this medley he

heard the reedy sound of pipes, and the twang of the two-stringed guitar in which the Arab ear—but probably no other in creation—delights, "It must be a wedding they are about," thought Alkamah; and his conjecture was true.

Making his way through the crowd to the tent, he found his mother there, as before; with her was the hostess, Malik's wife, decked out in all her best, and around them a whole assemblage of women, talking, laughing, and admiring each the other's finery, and each her own. From their conversation Alkamah soon understood who were the bride and bridegroom of the day; and from their names recognized the importance of their respective families.

His mother had perceived him coming while yet at some distance, and was ready to return with him to town. Only to let a guest depart without eating and drinking would be as great a solecism in Arab manners as to omit the same kind of welcome on arrival; and Alkamah had accordingly to sit down again for a few minutes, while Selma, under her mother's directions, brought in refreshments as before. But though what was brought was the same, the bringer was not so, at least in some respects. Selma, like the other girls of the encampment, had on that morning her best and gayest attire, as well as her brightest and most attractive looks; her gown was of white silk, embroidered round with gold; a rich gold-worked girdle clasped her waist; her thick black tresses hung down her back from under a costly head-dress; and her eyes sparkled through their long dark lashes like lamps lighted for a feast.

As she stood before them, dish in hand, she smiled on Alkamah—a smile merely of simple recognition; there was no further purpose in it. But when he returned the look, a shock ran through him, as if a glowing spark had suddenly fallen on a heap of dry fuel and set it all ablaze; his face glowed, and his eyes remained fixed, as if in a trance. Instinctively, Selma felt their meaning, and blushed in her turn till her very neck was ruddy; then hastened to set down the dish, and drew a little back into the darker portion of the tent.

The women around, occupied in their chat and merriment,

took no notice of these symptoms; and it was lucky for Alkamah that they did not, else the too-evident failure of his sorry pretext at eating might have aroused comment. Only his mother noticed his want of appetite; but he put her remark aside with some readily-invented pretext. However, he could not restrain his eyes, any more than if they had not been his own, from glancing again and again towards the corner where Selma stood; she saw, and did not turn away. Had she done so the after fate of both might have been different, and happier.

A few minutes—minutes that bore years within them—went by, and old Naïleh arose to take her leave. Alkamah started; gave one more look with a meaning well understood, and not unanswered or unaccepted by her to whom it was addressed; and with a brief salutation to the rest, followed his mother into the open air. She, when they were once out of the crowd, began talking about the marriage, and its accompanying festivities; but her son paid no attention, indeed he did not even hear what she said.

The path back to the town was now quiet enough, for all ordinary loiterers were that day collected in the camp, whence the sounds of music and rejoicing could still be heard, gradually fading away as the distance increased. Alkamah and his mother soon reached the low hills about halfway, on which a few acacia shrubs were growing, a thin tuft of light green network against the hazy sky. Just as they passed beneath, a fawn, one of a troop of deer that had during the past night sought the neighbourhood of the camp, as these animals often do, on the chance of picking up something to eat, came forward from among the trees, and stood gazing curiously at them with its gentle face and large liquid eyes. Alkamah watched it awhile in silence; then turning towards his mother, to whom he had not before addressed a single word, said suddenly, "But her eyes are brighter." "She! Who?" asked Naïleh, thus suddenly interrupted in her gossip, and not at once recognizing the direction which her son's thoughts had taken. He made no answer. "Nonsense;" said his mother, who now guessed whom he had

meant; "what have we to do with the girls of Morad, or they with us?" But Alkamah did not reply.

They went on slowly, for the air was still, and the heat, even for summer, unusually oppressive. Hardly, however, had the palm-groves of the town risen in sight, when a swirl of cool wind blew up sudden and sharp to meet them from the north, and in less than a couple of minutes a long low drift of smoke-like cloud, that had been hanging along the horizon in front, came swiftly on, driven in wreaths below the darkened sky, while large heavy splashes, rather than rain-drops, drenched the plain. Fortunately for the wayfarers a small shed, abandoned but still roofed in part, was not far off, and there they took refuge. When they were comfortably under shelter, Naïleh resumed her observations on the wedding they had left behind them in the camp; and her son, who was much annoyed with himself for his involuntary betrayal of his own secret, did his best to seem interested in her talk; though the patter of the rain on the leaf-thatch might have almost sufficed as an excuse for inattention.

However, showers of this kind, though not uncommon in the Arab highlands during the first months of summer, are generally of short duration; and in a quarter of an hour the heavens were clear again, only of a purer blue, and the sun's rays more brilliant than before: the air was life-giving and cool.

Once more Alkamah and his mother resumed their road, which soon led them among the gardens that, for a circuit of three or four hundred yards, girded the town. Their path here was overhung by the trees, now fresh washed from the summer dust, and in their brightest green; from every leaf hung a glittering crystal gem, and through all came the scent of newly-moistened herbs, mint, thyme, marjoram, and a hundred sweet smells; a close-growing wayside plant was hung with spikes of blue flowers, that looked out from among the shining foliage. The lad, who had again relapsed into silence, raised his head, and after a pause, as if speaking rather to his own thoughts than to another person, exclaimed, "Lovely! but not so lovely as she."

"Now, this is too bad; what folly will you be after next,

child?" said his mother. "And all this about a girl of Morad! and not half so handsome either as any one of your own Howazin cousins. Besides"—for now she had no doubt as to the person in her son's thoughts—"Malik's daughter is already betrothed to a man of her own clan."

"To whom is she betrothed?" quickly asked Alkamah, on whom the rest of his mother's speech had produced little effect.

"Why, to her cousin, of course, Okeyl," said Naïleh, and went on to describe the pedigree and expatiate on the wealth of the future bridegroom. "They are to be married," she concluded, "at the end of this very summer, before the tribe returns to Yemen."

She expected an answer, but none came; nor did Alkamah, whatever hints or allusions she might afterwards make, again utter a single word on the subject, either to her or to any one else of the family or townsmen. Naïleh, too, for her part, thought it best not to mention the matter to her husband or to others at home, hoping that an attachment so suddenly formed, and, for aught she knew, unreturned, might, if not fostered by opposition, come of itself to as speedy an end. She calculated not altogether unwisely, yet, as it happened, wrongly.

Not that for some time after there appeared anything special on Alkamah's own side to excite suspicion. With his father, his mother—every one, in short, his manner was just the same as it always had been; nor was there any perceptible change in his occupations and pursuits. To be sure, he was often absent from home, no one knew exactly where; but that had been his way before. Besides, few men or lads who could help it remained long either by day or night within the hot city walls during the summer months. And if by chance he was asked what he had been doing, he would answer frankly enough that he had been looking after the sheep or camels, as the case might be, within the pasture grounds. True, that these pasture-grounds lay to the south, and consequently in the same direction as the Morad encampment; but then they were much further off—half a day's ride distant at least. All this while his brothers, Sa'ad and Sa'eed, were absent on a long journey northwards to the

confines of Syria, whither they were in the habit of going every year with a trading caravan; his father, who had been absent for a few weeks, had lately returned.

Two months, or nearly so, had passed thus, when some herdsmen of the Yemenee clan, returning at nightfall to the camp, reported that they had more than once seen in the neighbourhood of the tents the figure of a man, who, as they judged, did not belong to their own people, and whose manner was that of one on the look-out for something or somebody. Under the dusk of twilight they could not, they said, distinguish more. But this was enough to cause some not unnatural uneasiness in the Morad camp; and for a while a careful look-out was kept in the quarter where the figure had, by the men's account, been seen, but with no result.

One night, however, it came about that Selma was missed from her father's tent; it was not long after dark—hardly an hour, in fact, and she had often before been away from home at that time of evening, or near it, as was then first remarked; only the fact had somehow hitherto passed unnoticed. But this night attention was drawn, for it so chanced that two of her brothers had arrived, just about sunset, from a distant journey—in fact from their homes in Nejran, at the entry of Yemen. They came wholly unexpected, and so long as every one was occupied with the first hurry of preparations for their reception, nothing particular was asked or said. But when these were over, and supper had taken off the edge of hunger, and given them leisure, so to speak, to look about them, they, very naturally, inquired after their sister. Then it was that, to her parents' surprise, no less than that of the rest, she was nowhere to be found; nor did any reason suggest itself to account for her being away at that hour.

Everybody felt the circumstance to be unpleasant, though no one liked to say so. A few minutes later Selma herself entered, her manner somewhat flurried and hasty, her colour heightened, and her breath quick; there were traces of damp sand on the skirts of her trailing over-dress. These indications, however, she partly accounted for, or tried to do so, by saying at once,

before any one had had time to inquire, that she had been out on a visit to another girl, a friend of hers, in such and such a tent, naming it, near a well at the further end of the camp, and that she had only just then heard of her brothers' arrival. Having given these explanations, and without allowing leisure for comment, she began asking her brothers a multitude of questions: when they had set out? how had they left her sisters in Yemen? how matters went with them and the rest of the family? and so on, thus prescribing to those present the channel of conversation at least, if not of thought. Her brothers with entire readiness followed the lead, the others joined, and the conversation continued between them and the neighbours who kept dropping in till midnight, without any sign of unpleasantness or even curiosity as to what had immediately preceded it. "All is right—they have suspected nothing," thought Selma.

They had suspected very much. But most of all her brothers, who next morning apart on a shrubby knoll outside the camp, talked the matter over between themselves, and determined to make further inquiries into its meaning.

Perseveringly, though warily, they set to work following up every clue in camp and town, and skilfully avoiding whatever might awake in the minds of others the surmises which before long had become certainty in their own. One indication led to another, and before a fortnight was over they had succeeded in arriving at the mortifying conclusion that their sister had a lover; that she had met him by appointment more than once, and that the lover was one, not of their own tribe, but of the stranger Howazin—was young Alkamah himself. Yet vehement as was their indignation at this discovery, they repressed it for a while, and, with Arab prudence, allowed some days more to pass before committing themselves to action of any kind.

Selma, who knew nothing of all this, yet saw in her relatives' arrival cause enough for extra caution, soon contrived to apprise her lover of the fact, and to recommend him greater wariness in his movements. For some time accordingly they by mutual consent broke off the interviews which had commenced not long after their first acquaintance, and had been kept up with toler-

able frequency ever since. But when time went by, and the watchers, if there were any, made no sign, Alkamah's passion and the girl's own light-heartedness again prevailed; and by means of a shepherd lad, a foster-brother of Alkamah's, and the only but faithful sharer of his secret, a meeting was agreed on in the little hollow of Batn-Darih, on the edge of a patch of wild and broken ground, on the east of the Morad tents.

It was about midnight; and Alkamah, wrapped in a dark cloak, had been waiting at Batn-Darih an hour or more, ensconced in the double shade of the hillock-side and of a cluster of dwarf palm-trees that grew at the bottom of the dell, and watching the rim of the valley, which, though really near, loomed in the night like a far-off range of black heights. The moon had not yet risen; only the countless stars, blue, yellow, white, and red, were sparkling down to the very edge of the narrow horizon. Suddenly a moving outline blotted some of them out; it was she, Selma, covered from head to foot in a black veil; then the outline became again invisible, or at least would have been so to any eyes except those of an expectant lover, as it cautiously descended the inner slope. Soon Alkamah and she were seated almost side by side; each had a long story, above a fortnight, of love, fear, hope, expectation, to tell; and each told it to a willing listener, with an eloquence not more of the tongue than of the heart, and without the least fear that any eye but their own was there to see, or ear to hear them in their talk.

And meanwhile, screened from observation by the darkness of the night, as well as by a thorny tuft that grew on the hill edge above and behind the lovers, two watchers whom they little thought of witnessed all. They were Selma's own brothers, Dahir and Serhan, who, from signs slight in themselves, but sufficient where jealousy was on the alert, had divined their sister's intention that evening, and had followed her unperceived to the appointed spot. There, stretched on the sandy margin, they peered down into the depth below with straining eyes, to which hate supplied the clearness of vision which the night-gloom denied.

"By God, I must kill him here and now," muttered the elder brother, as, without withdrawing his gaze for an instant from the group beneath, he half instinctively slipped back his hand to the hilt of his sword.

"Hold, Dahir, are you mad?" eagerly whispered in his ear the other, laying his hand as he spoke on that of the other. "Would you that we ourselves should make public our own disgrace?—the disgrace of the whole tribe?"

Dahir set his teeth. "If not now, another day. But, by the honour of our kin, I will do it this very night, if he draws but an inch nearer to her," he continued, in a low growl of intense hate.

"Gently, gently; wait till they have separated—they must soon separate, for the moon is about to rise—and I will tell you something more to the purpose than all that, and with less risk of compromising our good name and hers," replied Serhan, also under his breath; then added quickly, "Back a little—lie quite still; they are moving."

While this dialogue had been going on a faint yellowish gleam had begun to spread upwards from the desert horizon-line before them to the east, where the waning moon was at last about to appear. Alkamah and Selma had also perceived it, but lingered. Hurriedly they now rose; and after a brief leave-taking, the words of which were inaudible to the listening spies above, separated, each leaving the hollow by a separate way; Selma's took her unsuspectingly close by her brothers' hiding-place. They continued flat and motionless, till some minutes had elapsed; then first one, next the other, raised his head and looked around; the level moonlight was just touching the stones scattered on the plain. Perceiving that no human being was now in sight, they sat up.

"A curse on them both!" groaned Dahir, as he drew in a long breath.

"It is a bad business; she is as fond of him as he of her," said Serhan, in a matter-of-fact voice; "and as long as they remain in each other's neighbourhood matters will only get worse and worse. They must be separated; only it must be

managed quietly, for violence would be of no use; indeed it would cause a frightful scandal, by which we and everyone else in the tribe would be put to shame; besides a long reckoning to settle with the Howazin."

"I should like to eat their flesh raw and to drink their blood —his and every one of them," was Dahir's very unpromising answer.

"Let that talk alone," rejoined his brother; "we must set about it in quite a different way. We will tell our father what we have seen; he will talk the affair over with old Aamir; and depend upon it neither of them will like it any better than we do. What means they will next take is for them to determine; though I can guess fairly well. But of one thing you may be sure, there will be no more love-makings and meetings, either at Batn-Darih or anywhere else. And now let us get back into the camp before the moon is high."

But on the way he had some difficulty in keeping his more fiery, though, at heart, not more indignant brother, from executing that very night some less prudent resolution, which might, and indeed certainly would, have been not less fatal to his own sister's reputation than to her lover's life.

Next day, before the sun was well past the mid-heavens, Alkamah's father knew all.

Clandestine meetings, passion distinctly, and, above all, mutually avowed before betrothal, are, in the Arab code of family honour, offences of so deep a dye as wholly to preclude all possibility of future marriage between the indiscreet lovers, or even of alliance between their respective families, for ever after. Indeed the rule is so absolute, the penalty so inexorable, that it is strange how the wildest imprudence of youth can ever blind those who break it to the extremity of the risk they incur. Yet here, as in other things, love will from time to time defy reason, and lightly incur consequences which later on are found too heavy to be borne. Alkamah and Selma were destined to have their names inscribed in the long list of those who broke the law, and paid the forfeit.

Neither the brothers of the one nor the father of the other

were likely to hesitate for an instant as to the course to be pursued, or to experience the smallest compunction for the pain they were about to inflict: all pity for the culprits was lost in the enormity of the offence. The intercourse must be broken off, and that immediately; its renewal must be prevented, and that at any cost, not of feelings only but, if need were, of life itself. The only question was, how could this most surely be done without betraying to outside knowledge that which the paternal elder of Howazin on his side, and the youths of Morad on theirs, from analogous, though in some respects opposite motives, looked on with absolute, uncompromising disfavour.

Unluckily for the two whose fate was under discussion, their separation was a thing of only too easy management. A select band of fighting men from Roweydah and from other settlements of the Howazin tribe was at that very time on the point of setting out for the western, or Hejaz, frontier; there to take part in the oft-renewed struggle between their Arab kinsmen and the encroaching Egyptian power, with its numerous Bedouin allies. That young Alkamah should be sent on an enterprise in which his time of life so evidently fitted him to bear a part would be looked on as a matter of course; and while he was absent at a distance that would certainly not admit of his return before the winter, possibly not till the ensuing spring, Selma might be taken back by her family to her native Yemen, and be there safely married, out of the reach and, it did not seem unreasonable to hope, out of the memory or even thought of her indiscreet admirer. The plan was too simple a one not to succeed. It was agreed on; and the two elders parted, both satisfied with it, and, to a certain extent, with each other.

The evening of the day that followed this conference, Alkamah, who after receiving Selma's warning had at first kept somewhat out of the way, but now began to fear lest a too prolonged absence from town and home should give rise to dangerous comments, was seated, in company with his father and mother, in the back room of the ground-floor in their house. The grey gloaming from without, scantily admitted through two small windows high up in the wall, was now fast yielding place

to the flickering glare cast by a few brands of the Arab larch, or Ithel, that had been kindled in the little pit-like fireplace on the floor, more to make up after a fashion for the absence of lamp or candle than for any other purpose. The light played on the hard features and grizzled beard of old Aamir, who had seated himself at the upper end of the room, where two silk-covered cushions and a narrow strip of home-made carpet ministered alike to his dignity and comfort; it illuminated too, but less distinctly, because further off, the once handsome, but now worn and wrinkled face of his wife Naïleh, who leaned her back against the opposite wall lower down, and occupied her hands, but not her thoughts, in spinning. Though she had not been taken into her husband's latest counsel, she had a tolerable guess both of what had been really going on, and of what topics were likely to be discussed that very night; and her sympathies were already enlisted, in part at least, in her son's behalf. Still, being well aware from her husband's character that any interference of her own would, if volunteered, be not merely useless but positively injurious, she had made up her mind to reserve it till it should be absolutely necessary, and, in appearance at least, to follow, not attempt to lead, the talk.

Alkamah himself, though trying to look unconcerned, was in reality very far from comfortable. He had been summoned by his father on an evidently trifling pretence, and while on his way from the pastures had incidentally learnt that Selma's two brothers had been seen returning from the town; what errand had brought them thither his conscience, though it could not absolutely tell, might easily suggest. And his father's silence, which had now been prolonged for a full half-hour since his first coming in, helped only to confirm the ominous presage. With these things on his mind, he also, and wisely, determined to be passive as far as possible, and to avoid giving any sign by word or gesture that he was aware of being suspected of anything; unconsciously, however, but not the less really, he was resolved, if pushed to it, to avow all unreservedly, and to take the consequences. Meanwhile his father remained half-reclined in apparent ease, but inwardly anxious; unwilling to begin a

discussion of which he foresaw the difficulties, yet fully determined to carry his point, without avowing in so many words his true motive, if it could be so managed, but ready, if circumstances required it, for the plainest speaking out. He would infinitely prefer the former, but would not, should that prove insufficient, shrink from the latter.

The customary row of half-a-dozen curiously wrought copper coffee-pots, ranged according to their respective sizes from the biggest to the smallest, like children in a file, stood along the edge of the fire-place in front of Alkamah. Almost mechanically he occupied himself with pouring out the contents of one into another; then bethought himself, and, in the hope that by so doing he might somehow put an end to the prolonged silence which to anxiety like his was becoming insupportable, he filled a cup and handed it unasked to his father.

Aamir took it and drank; then threw it gently from him—it fell upright on the mat and remained so. The half-jesting omen, one in common use among Arabs, was not much, but it sufficed to encourage him.

"Alek," he said, addressing his son, "I expect your brothers back in a few days; some of the caravan people came in yesterday, and they told me that the others will soon follow." He paused: Alkamah gave no answer; for this beginning was ambiguous, and he preferred to wait to see what would come next.

"Either Sa'ad or Sa'eed when here can look after the camels and the house during the winter," continued his father. "These two years past they have been out on forays; and it is high time now that you too, child, should take your turn, and let people see that you can do as well as your brothers."

"So, they have found it out in good earnest, and want to get me out of the way; that is the meaning," said Alkamah to himself. Then aloud, "Father, it is not my fault that I have not been out before; I have been ready long since; but you never sent me, or said anything about it. And besides,——" here he stopped short.

Naïleh looked up from her work. "He is very young yet,"

said she, "a mere child; and had better remain to take care of the herds and the garden for a couple of years yet, before going on raids and fighting. Time enough for all that when he is grown up; meanwhile I want somebody to stay with me in the town; and you and his brothers are never quiet for a week together."

Aamir ignored this speech, as well as his son's; and continued, exactly as if no objection had been made or could be. "So-and-So,"—naming a townsman of some importance,—"will set out to-morrow with thirty or forty of our young men for the Hejaz, to help our allies, the Benoo-Harb, against the Egyptian troops. You, boy, shall go with them. When I was your age," he went on, now replying indirectly to what his wife had said, "I had already given wounds in fair fight, and received them too; and it is no credit to the family that a son of mine should pass his time always within four walls, like a girl, or an old woman."

His wife understood the taunt, but as she had no inclination to provoke more, she kept silence, and only regretted that she had spoken at all. Alkamah grew angry; and looking doggedly before him, said, "When next spring comes I will go, but not sooner." With this he began arranging the burning ends of wood on the dog-irons, with an air of, "I have made up my mind, and do not mean to change, come what may."

Aamir sat in silence a minute or two; he knew his son's temper, and was unwilling to drive him to open rupture and revolt. He looked towards his wife; but she had resumed her knitting, and seemed to have no further intention of mixing in the talk either one way or other. He must take it on himself then to speak out; but could he trust himself to measure his words on so disagreeable a subject? On the other hand he was no tyrant,—household tyrants are rare in Arabia,—and he admitted to himself that both his son and his wife had a right to be told the real motive of his command; only he was ashamed to do so. Just then the last piece of wood, that had been flaming brightly like a candle and lighting up the whole room, suddenly snapped and collapsed among the embers, leaving all in darkness, but for the dull red glow from the fire-place, barely

sufficient to show the general outlines, not however the features of those seated around. The obscurity was convenient; and he availed himself of it.

"Alek," he said, addressing his son briskly, and in the familiar tone of former years.

"At your service," answered the lad, looking up.

"What makes you wish to remain at home," continued his father, "is, I know, that girl of Morad, the daughter of Malik: and that is precisely the very reason why you must be off. Listen, both of you," for Alkamah and his mother each gave signs of interrupting, "it is for your good; I know everything that has happened; so do her people too. As for you, boy, you have acted like a fool, and have got yourself and the girl talked of all over the town. How in God's name do you expect to marry her, after this gossip has been set on foot? or do you want to disgrace the whole family, and to bring us into a quarrel which God alone can tell how it may end?"

This was not pleasant to hear; but the tone in which it was spoken was far from unkindly; and Alkamah felt that he had deserved and might have received worse. So he only hung down his head, and said nothing.

"Besides, you are only a child, as one can see by your conduct," continued his father, following up the advantage he had gained, "and a child you will remain till you have seen something of the world, and learnt the use of arms like a man. No one would dream of giving his daughter to a mere lad, who has never gone further than the garden-walls and the town pastures; least of all a man of Morad, one of the hardest fighting tribes in the whole of Yemen."

"I am as much a man as any sheep-driver or horseman either of Yemen," muttered Alkamah, still looking down; "and if any one desires to try, he may soon find out that."

"Very good," replied Aamir; "perhaps you are, Alek; but the plain fact is that till you have done something to prove your manhood, you can never hope to get the girl you wish for, or any other. Do as I tell you; and when you return we will see about the matter. Else——"

"He will obey you," eagerly interrupted Naïleh, fearing the evil effects of a direct threat; "he will do all you wish—will you not, Alek?" turning to her son. "Only," to her husband, "do not send him away too far, let him come back soon, and all will be well."

Alkamah saw that further resistance on his part would be useless, and did not attempt it. Some conversation followed, chiefly about the expedition which he was to accompany, and his own preparations for it; after which his father got up, girt on his sword, threw his cloak over his shoulders, and left the house. The lad followed him into the street and to the town gate; then returned to his mother, whom he found where he had left her, but with her head on her hands, crying bitterly. He sat down by her, and tried to comfort her, but she drew away from him, and continued sobbing.

"What have you done?" said she; "why did you not take my advice at first? Ah! it is all my own fault; it is I who am to blame for taking you to the camp! And now I shall lose you; you will go to the war, and God knows when you will come back; and I,—oh, what shall I do?"

He kissed her hands and her forehead; but it was long before she had recovered sufficient composure to speak connectedly. When she did, it was to use every argument, every persuasion in her power to induce him to give up his profitless attachment for Selma, "that Yemenee girl," as she called her; and to turn his affections instead on Fareedah, or indeed any maiden of his own town and tribe.

But this was a point on which Alkamah was not to be moved, not even by his mother. Besides, of a confiding temperament, he had taken his father's simulated compliance for genuine; and believed that to the ultimate success of his suit nothing more was wanted than his own fulfilment of the conditions just imposed upon him. Anyhow, her he would have, and no other; death itself, he said, should not change him. His mother sighed; but considering in her turn that her son's hope of obtaining Selma was after all the best pledge for his speedy return; while, on the contrary, if he despaired of her, he might not improbably

be hurried into some wild resolution, resulting in perpetual absence or worse, she too took the part of apparently consenting to the main object of his wishes; till poor Alkamah really thought he had gained over both father and mother to his side.

The fighting-party of which his father had spoken was in earnest to have set out on the next day. But "half the journey is to cross the threshold," says the Arab proverb; and if punctuality be a virtue it is one little practised in this country, where, on occasions of the sort, somebody is always waiting for somebody else; and everybody has at the very last moment something missing that nobody can do without. And thus it now happened, without the need of any manœuvring on Alkamah's part, that a full week elapsed before he or any of his comrades left Roweydah. During this interval, in spite of the counter-vigilance kept by a mutual understanding between the relatives,—love's natural enemies,—on either side, the lovers managed one more secret interview—the last.

Alkamah certainly protested much, but not more than he had it in him to perform; Selma, it might be, protested too much; but not more than she then meant and thought herself equal to perform. As they rose to separate they held each the other's hand; there was a signet ring on Alkamah's; by some girlish fancy Selma kept playing with it as they talked, turning it round and round on his finger.

"Take it, love," he said.

"Your ring indeed! why, what should I do with it? a pretty fuss there would be if my people saw your signet in my keeping!" laughed she. "No; leave it where it is, till the time comes when you can openly lend it me, or when I can use it as my own also."

"So I will," he answered. They kissed, and parted.

Two days after, at noon,—it was a glorious noon, brisk air and spotless blue sky,—thirty-four riders with spear and sword, mounted on dromedaries, and taking with them about half the number of led horses, issued from the westerly gate of Roweydah, crossed a gravelly plain, then a little range of hills, and were soon out of sight of the town, and on their way for the Hejaz.

One of the riders was Alkamah. A crowd of relations, friends, wives, daughters, cousins, had stood outside the town-gate watching their departure. Among that crowd was Fareedah, Alkamah's betrothed, and his mother Naïleh. She had seen her son for the last time.

PART II.

THE Howazin contingent had bad luck. After a long and toilsome journey across two-thirds of the broadest breadth of the Arabian Peninsula, in the hottest and droughtiest season of the year, with many incidental discomforts, such as sometimes an unexpected deficiency of water in the wells on their line of route, sometimes an unfriendly encounter with a rival Bedouin clan, they arrived at last within the territory of the Benoo-Harb, and found their friends not prosperous, but on the contrary, hard pressed, and much in need even of the slight succour that so small an auxiliary band as their own could afford.

Some weeks passed in desultory skirmishing rather than fighting with their hereditary enemies, the tribesmen of Oteybah and Hodeyl, who were now under arms in the Egyptian cause. For a while nothing serious occurred on either side, till one morning early, Alkamah, and about twenty of his companions from Roweydah, who, in their ignorance of the localities, had advanced dangerously far on the hostile ground, were surprised and surrounded by at least double their own number of the enemy's horsemen. So sudden and unexpected was the attack, that many of the Howazin were overpowered and killed before they had even had time to think of defence; the remainder, with a few warriors of Benoo-Harb, who chanced to come up during the fray, behaved themselves like men. But it was no use, the odds were too many for them; and after half an hour of fierce contest they gave way and fled, leaving behind them more than a dozen dead or disabled on the field; and amongst the number Alkamah, who after receiving several sabre-cuts had fallen bleeding and senseless from his horse. Thus the Oteybah

remained masters of the day; while the vanquished, as was only natural, spread everywhere in their flight the most exaggerated accounts both of the number of their opponents and of their own losses. And thus it happened that when the report of the fray reached Roweydah a month later, it included the name of Alkamah in the list of the dead.

Dead, however, he was not; but, which was next bad, a prisoner. His dress, the goodness of his armour and horse, and the rich ornaments of his sword-hilt, led the victorious Oteybah while they busied themselves in spoiling the slain and the wounded, to conclude that he must be a person of some consequence, probably belonging to a wealthy family, and for whose liberation accordingly a heavy ransom might in due time be demanded and obtained, according to Bedouin custom. Under this impression they neither gave him, as they did to two or three others of his less fortunate comrades lying beside him, the finishing stroke, nor left him where he was at the disposal of the vultures, which were already hovering impatient over the blood-stained plain. On the contrary, they lifted him up with a care that a looker-on, unacquainted with the real motive, might have taken for tenderness, and conveyed him, still insensible, to a neighbouring village, where the women of the tribe gave him the benefit of what nursing their experience, a pretty large one, of like cases, and their own compassionate feelings, certainly not diminished by the youth and good looks of their helpless charge, suggested.

Fresh air, a sound constitution, and the absence of over much medical interference, are excellent conditions for a cure; and it was not long before Alkamah's wounds, which, like most sabre-cuts, were rather wide than deep, began to heal; so that a surgeon, had such been present, would have pronounced him not only out of danger, but progressing favourably towards convalescence. This his captors, without being surgeons, observed, and lost no time in inquiring of him his name, his birthplace, his family, and the like.

But their calculations were deceived; for Alkamah had, with a certain foreboding, determined long before what his conduct

should be under such circumstances, did they occur, and had even taken his measures accordingly. How could he ever look Selma, and yet more her relations, the warlike Benoo-Murad, in the face, if he came before them as a ransomed prisoner, owing his life to the contemptuous pity or greed of his enemies, and the forced liberality of his own people? Loss of liberty, loss of life, anything would be preferable to this; he would return to Roweydah, if not successful, at least unshamed, or not return at all.

With this intention he had, the very day that he left his native town, taken off his signet ring, the same which Selma's fingers had touched, and, with a sigh, buried it out of the way, in a lonely place, where no eyes but his own were likely to search for it again. And as he was now the only prisoner of his clan alive in the hands of the Oteybah, nothing remained that could possibly identify him except his own avowal, and that he was resolved never should. So question him as they might, they obtained no answer.

This silence of his they were at first inclined to attribute to the moodiness consequent on pain, extreme weakness, and recent captivity; and in this belief desisted for a few days from their questionings, not doubting that with the return of strength and the renewed longings after freedom that could not fail to accompany it, their prisoner would prove less reticent. But when in due course of time his wounds had healed over, and his recovery was complete, or nearly so, his interrogators, much to their annoyance, found him not a whit more communicative than he had been before. Severity was then brought to bear; he was treated with increasing harshness; his allowance of food was curtailed, and his bonds tightened; while threats and even blows alternated daily with promises and fair speeches; all directed to obtain from him the declaration of his name and family. But Alkamah held his own; threats and blandishments, blows and ill-usage, were alike thrown away; and at last it became clear to his captors themselves that his resolution was not to be overcome, even by the fear of death itself.

Killing him was, however, no part of their plan. The Oteybah,

though half barbarous in their habits, were not wantonly cruel; like other Bedouins, they would, except under special provocation, have recoiled from putting a prisoner to death in cold blood; and besides, they were much too prudent to throw away with his life their only chance of turning him sooner or later into profit. But their expectations by being deferred became less keen; new incidents of foray and plunder drew away their interest from the old; by degrees they almost ceased to watch over the captive, or rather made over that duty in great part to the women of the village. By their compassion his bonds, though not absolutely taken off, were slacked to such an extent that he was able to move about; he was even occasionally allowed to leave the narrow hut, so long his prison, and stretch his cramped limbs, for a short distance, and under guard, in the open air. At last, he came to be employed, along with others, in fetching water, in collecting firewood, in milking the camels, and so forth: all occasions of which he availed himself to look about him as much as possible, till he ended by getting into his head a fairly accurate idea of the place itself, as also of the direction in which he conjectured that his own regions of Nejd and the town of Roweydah must lie, and to what point of the compass lay the route that might if followed take him back thither.

Long he waited, till in the early spring of the year a night unusually dark with clouds, wind, and rain, coinciding with the temporary absence on some business or other of those to whose particular keeping he had been intrusted, gave him the wished-for opportunity. Cautiously he rid himself of the cords that still, though loosely, bound his limbs; more cautiously yet he made his way out of the house; most cautiously of all, lest alarm should be given by dogs or men, he threaded the precincts of the village by paths that he had observed and marked out for himself in the daytime; and then, eastward ho!

The adventures that befell him on his long and difficult journey across the wide tract that lay between the Hejaz and Roweydah need not here be narrated in detail. For the first three days he was followed, and only escaped recapture by plunging into the wildest and most inaccessible regions of the

rocky Teyma desert. He met with many dangers, sometimes from wild beasts, sometimes from roving Bedouins; of hunger, thirst, cold, heat, watchfulness, fatigue, he had full share. Even when comparatively safe from pursuit prudence compelled him to avoid the more frequented tracts, and instead to make wide circuits which often prolonged what would have been the journey of one day to that of two or more; not rarely, too, he was compelled to halt where he might from sheer weariness and exhaustion. But harder to bear than all the rest was that the thought of Selma, once his only but sufficient support, now no longer cheered him but tormented. Night and day her image moved before him; she was the goal towards which he must strive, though hopeless to attain; for he felt sure, though why he could not say, that on his arrival at home he would not find her there; and this gloomy presentiment from which, do what he might, he could not free himself, not merely depressed his spirits, but unnerved his limbs, and rendered every privation, every suffering, doubly painful.

In fact, he must have broken down altogether, and ended his labours and his love alike by the side of some stony hillock, or under the thorn-bushes of some torrent bed, had not the hospitable generosity of a Bedouin chief near the frontier of Nejd, in whose encampment he sought a couple of days' repose and food, provided him with a camel; mounted on which he was able to continue his journey. With this seasonable help he went on for ten more days, not quite certain of his direction; till one afternoon he suddenly found himself among well-known landmarks that assured him of his near approach to his native town, which he had left almost a year before in very different plight.

Having fully ascertained his whereabouts, he halted his camel in the most secluded spot he could find, and remained there till evening, as the afternoon was of all times of day the most likely for falling in with some chance acquaintance among the shepherds or herdsmen without the walls; and he wished to avoid this sort of premature recognition before entering the town. There was indeed less risk of it than he thought; for he

himself was only half aware of the change wrought in his appearance by the last few months. His face was now lean, weather-worn, and almost black; his dress scanty, of the coarsest quality, and all in rags; there was neither lance in his hand nor sword by his side; nothing, in a word, to announce the son of the wealthy Aamir, the prosperous Alkamah of former days. A relation or intimate friend might just have recognized him; an acquaintance scarcely.

The first half of the night he passed alone under the starlight, wrapped in the tattered cloak which was now almost his only covering; but he did not attempt to sleep, his eyes were open, gazing up at the spangled heaven overhead. The stars seemed to have been caught in the sky and stood still; would they never slope westwards? Midnight came: there was some distance to go; and it was not till about halfway between dawn and noon that he halted a second time on the summit of a long ascent, whence he could distinctly see the well-known palm-tops of the Roweydah gardens across a further ridge; while immediately in front of him was the hollow where the Morad camp had been the year before.

Where the camp had been. It was there no longer. Only the shallow lines traced on the ground where the tents had stood, and the marks of some small water-channels that had been dug out leading thither from the wells, remained to indicate its former position. No life, no movement, was there now. And Selma? Alkamah knew that his forebodings had been verified, one way or other, and his eyes filled with tears that dimmed his sight but did not fall.

He felt as if he could willingly have lain down there and then, and never risen again, so entirely had all energy for going further, all desire of the future, left him. But this would not do, he must learn more; and that could only be within the town and from those of his own family. So, after a time, he again switched his lean beast into movement, and followed the same path that a twelvemonth before he had traversed—with what different feelings!—in his mother's company, till he saw the town gate open in front. Here a second time his resolution

failed him, and like one who hesitates before taking a plunge into deep water, though he knows there is no good in deferring it, he turned aside from the road, and sought a respite from the inevitable among the old haunts of quiet in his father's garden.

He made his camel crouch down on the sand near the hedge outside, and entered. Much to his satisfaction he found no one there to disturb the solitude he wished for in his favourite place by the well. But no likeness of Selma now looked up at him from its depths; no girlish form peeped out from behind the palm-trees. Within, without, all was blank. Tired and out of heart, Alkamah stretched himself by the margin, half in shade, half in sun, and remained there without stirring, without even thinking what he should do or where he should go next.

A rustling noise was heard; some one was approaching by the narrow path which led up to the well. Alkamah turned his face that way, and at once started to his feet; it was his brother Sa'ad. Recognition was easy on the one side, though not equally so on the other; for Sa'ad, taken by surprise, had to look hard and inquiringly for several seconds before he became sure of his brother in the gaunt and ragged figure there. He then embraced him as one returned from the dead.

The first greetings were soon exchanged, and the first questions asked and answered. Alkamah in a few words gave a summary account of what had happened in the Hejaz, of his own capture and subsequent escape; and learnt in return the principal facts relating to his own townsmen and family. His father and his brother Sa'eed were both absent just then; they had gone on a journey in the direction of Basrah, and would probably soon return: Sa'ad was the only one actually in town. And his mother, Naïleh? "May God have mercy on her!" was the answer that announced her death. It was a melancholy story. When the report telling of the unfortunate end of the Roweydah expedition, and—though falsely—of her son's being among the slain, first reached her, she had fainted away, and remained insensible for many hours. Consciousness at last returned; but her grief, embittered doubtless—Sa'ad did not understand this, but Alkamah thought it—by self-reproach, and the remembrance

of the share she herself had taken in sending her favourite child away on that ill-omened journey, returned with it, and proved too much for her; she drooped rapidly away, and before many weeks were over was in her grave.

"How will he bear to be told about Malik's daughter?" was Sa'ad's reflection when he saw the silent but intense grief with which his brother heard the sad news already given. "And what had I best tell him about her? And how?" But he was spared for the time the necessity of coming to any decision on that subject; for neither by question nor allusion even did Alkamah give any outward sign of so much as remembering her existence, neither then, while they yet remained conversing in the garden, nor afterwards, when they entered the town together, nor when, later in the evening, all his relatives and kindred to the eighth degree of cousinship assembled in the guest-room to hear his story, and to congratulate him on his safe return. Sa'ad waited with much uneasiness for the next day, and the inquiries which Alkamah would, surely, not longer defer beyond it.

But that very night the reaction of rest and disappointment combined manifested itself in a sort of low fever lasting nearly a month; and for an even longer time Alkamah showed no desire to learn more, nor even once stirred out beyond the walls of his own courtyard; perhaps he would hardly have had the strength to do so had he wished it. But the truth was that he did not wish it; on the contrary, he shrank back from the fuller knowledge which sooner or later must meet him when once he mixed in the crowd outside, certain that it could bring him no happiness, and willing to stave off the evil day.

During this interval many things happened. Alkamah's father, old Aamir, and his elder brother, Sa'eed, returned from Basrah, and a family council, to which Alkamah, of course, was not called, took place. After much deliberation, it was resolved that the deception, contemplated, it must be allowed, from the first, should now be definitely carried out. Selma was, for her lover, to be dead; her very tomb, or rather a small mound of stones professing to indicate it, was got ready, not far from the

place where the tent of her family had been pitched the previous summer. She had died—so the story was to run—a natural death of fever or something in the fall of the year, just when her people were making ready for their return to Yemen. "He will be very sad about it," Alkamah's relatives thus argued for him, "but he will end by getting over it much sooner than if he knew how matters really are. When he thinks of her as dead, he will lose hope, and his regrets will in consequence pass off all the speedier, and then before long a new attachment may easily, in the natural course of things, take the place of the old, and all will be forgotten." Thus they reasoned, meaning not unkindly by the lad.

But falsehood, even with the best-intentioned and the most reasonable of motives, is a bad foundation to build on; and its superstructure is apt either to crumble to pieces all at once, or, if it remains, to remain for evil only, not for good. "The thing that is" cannot come of "the thing that is not."

And where, in fact, was Selma? And what was she doing in the meanwhile?

Lost she certainly was, so far as Alkamah was concerned; neither dead nor buried, but lost. After so many vows and protestations, after so many pledges of unchangeable fidelity given and accepted, after declarations that no power on earth, neither kindred, nor parents, nor force, nor death itself should ever induce or compel her to acknowledge any suitor, any other love but her first love, her Alkamah, she was already betrothed to another—married to another. So it was, not indeed through purposed faithlessness on her part, it was weakness only, and weakness for which much might be pleaded in excuse.

For hardly had Alkamah left the neighbourhood than her parents, who were now in the secret, her brothers, her kinsfolk—and they were many and powerful, accustomed to command and to be obeyed—began their attack, resolved to break off her unauthorized, and, in their opinion, disgraceful attachment to the Howazin interloper, and to substitute in its place the unexceptionable claims of Selma's previously betrothed cousin, the

young Okeyl. Throughout the struggle a certain discretion on their side, and modesty on hers, kept indeed the name and existence of Alkamah in the background, a motive consciously felt by both parties, and avowed by neither. But persuasion, entreaty, prayers, menaces, duty, obedience, pride of clan, shame, honour, vanity, every deterrent, every incentive, were brought into action. Hints, too, broad enough to admit of no misinterpretation, were thrown out that, marriage or no marriage, come what might, no stranger alliance, no alien from the Arabs of the north, should ever be admitted to tarnish the southern purity of the blood of Morad. And when to all this was added the presence of Okeyl himself, young, handsome, high-spirited, and wealthy, while Alkamah was not only absent, but, before long, reported and believed dead, what wonder if the cause that had everything to support it except love, prevailed over the cause that had nothing to support it but love, and if Selma's resistance, at first vehement, gradually subsided into melancholy, melancholy into resignation, resignation into consent? To do her justice, the last was deferred till what seemed certain tidings came of her Howazin lover's death on the field of battle. But when a month later the Morad encampment broke up, and among the rest Selma, mounted on a led dromedary, amid all the protection of curtains and attendants, departed for Yemen, she was the re-affianced, and, within six more months, the bride of Okeyl. Their marriage, which was celebrated with much pomp and rejoicing, music, gun-firing, and feasting of the tribe, must have taken place exactly about the time that Alkamah returned to Roweydah, and found in his native town that worst solitude, the solitude of the heart.

Meanwhile, of false or true, he, poor youth, knew nothing, beyond the fact that Selma and her kindred had left the neighbourhood; of this much his own eyes had already assured him the morning he approached the town. At last a day came when in answer to the inquiries which he could no longer repress, the daughter of Malik was mentioned in his hearing; but it was to announce her death, according to the story invented and agreed upon by his kinsmen. He heard with apparent

calm, so that the narrators at first congratulated themselves not a little on the success of their scheme; but that very evening he had already found his way out of the town to the tomb where he supposed her laid.

It was a little mound piled up with a few large and several smaller stones, close by the twisted roots of a spreading thorn-bush, and not far from the very spot where they last had met. From morning till noon the sun blazed hot upon it; but after mid-day the shadow of the thorn-bush turned by degrees, and lengthened over the place.

Here Alkamah would go daily, and sit for hours in the thorn-shade, his eyes fixed on the ground, speaking to no one, and even allowing no one to approach, his whole soul concentrated in one intense longing for but a moment's intercourse with her whom he believed to be buried below. Sometimes, in very despair of meeting her again in the world of waking, he would lie down on the mound and try to go to sleep, in the vague hope that she might perhaps visit him in his dreams. But whether he waked or slept, he always left the place with the same unsatisfied craving at his heart, to return thither in spite of it the next day, and meet with the same result. Then he would go and busy himself in the pursuits of every-day Arab life, in the gardens, in the palm-tree plantations, with the sheep or the camels; but it was no better, his heart had no share in it all. He mounted his horse and went out more than once with the bands of his fellow-townsmen on cattle-driving or foray among the neighbouring tribes, and after weeks of riding and skirmishing, in which he showed himself outwardly the Alkamah of former years, active and daring as ever, would return just as he had left, with no consciousness of having obtained a single moment's change of feeling or thought. Whether he went or stayed, it was all one. Even the memory of his mother failed to touch him. With the dead, one alone excepted, as with the living, he felt like one who had nothing to do; he neither thought of them nor wished to think. From his father and brothers he was absolutely estranged. They had helped—this much at least he knew—to separate him from Selma; they had united in sending him

away from her, and whether intending it or not, he cared not now to inquire, in parting between him and her for ever. The work of destiny—yes; but he could cherish no affection or even goodwill for those who had made themselves the instruments of that destiny, and of his loss.

Of others, townsmen or relatives, he took no heed. He met Fareedah, his own betrothed cousin, now fast blooming into the full beauty of womanhood, and hardly recognised her; if she herself or her parents had entertained till then any hopes of attracting his fancy that way, they were compelled from that moment to give them up altogether. So it was with the rest; he neither sought company nor avoided it; when spoken to he answered, else he kept silence; he took due share in the life and action around him, and seemed to forget it the instant after. Nothing from without affected him with either joy or sorrow, fear or hope; he was like one from another world, moving in, but unconnected with this. Only his visits to the mound by the thorn-bush continued as frequent as ever; and when there and alone his feelings would break forth, not changed, but with constantly renewed freshness, and more vehement, though ever unsatisfied, longings. Two years passed thus, two summers and winters; and he was still as far from nearing the repose of forgetfulness as the first day.

One afternoon, in the spring of the third year, he sat by the stone-heap nursing his illusions, and thinking of her whom he imagined to himself separated from him by only a few feet of earth and pebbles, and faithful to him even in death; his face was covered by his hands, and silent tears were running down between his fingers to the ground; when he felt the shadow of the thorn-bush deepened by something else between him and the sun. Not caring to see what it was, he waited till it should move off of itself; but it did not; and he raised his head with some impatience. Then he perceived, standing near beside him, a herdsman, the same who had formerly served as messenger between himself and Selma, a young man of four or five and twenty, by name Shebeeb, and his own foster-brother. Alkamah having recognised him, and answered his salutation, again bent

forward with his face on his hands, as a sign that he wished to be alone.

Shebeeb, however, whose foster connection, a close one from the Arab point of view, warranted a certain amount of boldness, instead of complying with the hint given, took his place on the ground by Alkamah, and said, "Brother."

"Leave me alone," was the answer, given unwillingly, and without even looking up.

But Shebeeb continued, "My brother, I have something to tell you, which it concerns you to hear; and which," he added, after a pause, "I would have told you long ago, but that I was afraid to speak."

"What is it?" asked Alkamah, in a tone that implied great indifference as to what might come next.

"It is," said the other, distinctly articulating every word, "that you are deceived; you think this," striking it with his foot, "a tomb; it is not so; it is only an empty pile of stones, with nothing under them; and while you are sitting here, wasting your life, and eating your heart to no purpose, Malik's daughter is alive, and far away from hence, in her own country, in Yemen."

Before he had finished speaking, Alkamah was sitting bolt upright, and staring in the other's face like one mazed, unable at first fully to take in his meaning, so utterly unexpected, and so sudden.

"What is it?" was all he could utter.

Shebeeb repeated his words.

"But how can it be? Where is she? They told me, every one said that she was dead, and buried under this grave; can she really be alive? Speak!"

His face was flushed, his voice eager; his eyes bright as they had not been for years.

Shebeeb looking round, to make sure that no one else was near; and then, drawing closer to Alkamah, told his story distinctly and fully from first to last. It was the true account of Selma's departure from Nejd, and of the deception practised on her lover by his own family. But of Selma's subsequent

marriage he, of course, knew nothing, though, considering the circumstances under which she left Roweydah, he could not but conjecture its probability; and so might Alkamah also have done, had he not been too much in the habit of judging others, those at least whom he loved, by himself.

"They did very wrong to deceive you so; and I would have told you the truth long ago, but that at first I hoped you would not have taken it so much to heart; and afterwards, when I saw how matters went with you, I was afraid. But now, for some time past I have been waiting for an opportunity of speaking," concluded Shebeeb, fearful lest his foster-brother should break out into a not unjustifiable explosion of anger against him for having been silent so long. Nor was he without apprehension that Alkamah's indignation might prompt him to some rash measure regarding those who had originated the plot; or, again, that the violent revulsion of his feelings might be too much for his reason, or even his life.

But his fear was without cause; Alkamah was too happy in the knowledge of the simple fact that she whom he had so long mourned for dead, was really alive, to be for the moment accessible to any other idea, or to remember any other person or thing except her. Even the likelihood of her having already passed into the possession of another did not then cross his mind. It was only the change of one all-absorbing thought for another equally engrossing; of "I shall never see her more," into "We shall meet again."

No more listlessness now, no more inaction; he would follow her, wherever she might be; claim her, whoever should oppose. Of difficulties, of the enmity of either tribe, hers or his, kinsmen or strangers, he took no account. Howazin and Morad, banded in one with all the spearsmen of Nejd, and all the swordsmen of Yemen, should not bar his way. He would find her, win her, or die in the attempt. His enthusiasm communicated itself to his foster-brother, who declared that be the dangers what they might, by journey or camp, in desert or in field, he would share them to the end.

The sun had almost set, and the distant sand-edge between

them and the town was dotted here and there with homeward-moving figures, black against the yellow ground, when Alkamah and Shebeeb, after several hours of earnest talk, left the mound; and before they reached the gardens and separated for the night, their plan had been fully arranged. Shebeeb was to pick out two of the lightest-footed and most enduring dromedaries, to prepare a couple of small water-skins, and a few simple dried provisions for the journey; and, with these, to wait his brother-in-law next evening behind a neighbouring hill. Meanwhile, Alkamah returned into the town, and passed the day that was to be the last for him within its walls, making his own preparations also, but of course giving no one any hint of his intentions. The signet ring he had already searched after, and found in the place where he had hidden it, and, with many sighs and memories, replaced it on his finger. Now he looked at it with complacency; it was token no longer of despair, but of hope—a link not with the past only, but the future.

Again the sun set, and evening closed in. Alkamah took no farewell of his father and his brothers; his alienation from them, after what he had learnt the day before, was no longer passive, but active; they were not even strangers to him now, they were enemies. Only under the brief twilight he went to his mother's grave; she had taken no part in that long coil of deceit—she, so he thought, would have been true to him had she lived. Bitterly weeping, he called on her, as though she could have heard his voice, to forgive and to help him; then, with a sudden effort, rose up and walked away, feeling at every step as if his very heart-strings were being torn asunder. The remembrances of many years, the images of childhood and boyhood, the inwoven attachment to home and family, all in him that was not the love of Selma was at that moment centred and bound up for him in the tomb from which he turned; it was wrenching himself from half of his life—a bitter pang. Then, without re-entering the town gates, he went round outside the walls to the pit-like hollow behind the ridge, where the dromedaries were in waiting, and Shebeeb ready with them. Beyond, to the west, lay the path, or rather the great open

desert; the low horizon glowed with the coming light of the moon; Alkamah recalled to mind Batn-Darih, and hastened to mount. All night they journeyed on at a rapid pace, and morning dawned on them full thirty miles distant from Roweydah, where, to their good fortune, they were not missed till two days later; they then were tracked, but in vain.

Yemen and the Nejrah valley, the territory of the Benoo-Morad, and the goal of their way, lay to the south, or nearly so. But Alkamah and his companion did not venture to keep the direct and well-known track, by which they might easily have been followed, and which would, besides, have led them by several villages and customary halting-places that they now naturally desired to avoid; so, instead, they made a wide circuit west, among the trackless sands of the much-dreaded Nefood.

This was the very region that Alkamah had crossed two years bygone, on his flight from the Hejaz, but in a widely distant part of it; so that his former wanderings gave no clue of any use for their present track. Shebeeb, however, had often explored these wastes in different directions; and his experience was of more avail. When that was at a loss, the position of the sun by day, and of the stars at night, became their only guide, one sufficient in the main. At noon they crouched for the hottest hours of the day, scarce less intolerable to the camels than to their riders, under the shade of some jutting rock, such as often crops out abrupt and black through the sandy covering of the waste, or of some lonely bush, tamarisk, or thorn; towards evening they resumed their monotonous way, and continued it with hardly any interruption through the night and morning. Only when their small supply of water began to fail them, Shebeeb's knowledge of the localities was tasked to discover some brackish well, such as stray Bedouins of the smaller and less noble clans frequent, and where there was no probability of their meeting any of their own townsmen or tribe. But not till a week or more after leaving Roweydah did they allow themselves a single real halt that could be said to bear any proportion to the length of their travelling stages and the fatigue of the way.

Alkamah, eager if not exactly hopeful, was at first too much preoccupied with the thought of what lay before him to pay attention either to the scenes they traversed, or to what they themselves endured; nor ever complained, unless it was that their dromedaries did not go fast enough, or that their daily period of rest was too prolonged. Shebeeb, with no strong passion of his own to entrance him, and whose only motive for so difficult and even dangerous an undertaking was his attachment for his foster-brother, wondered, but did no remonstrate. Accustomed as shepherd or herdsman from his childhood upwards to every form of hardship incidental to an Arab out-of-doors life, he was confident that his own strength, though severely taxed, would not give way altogether; and, moreover, guessed that the overwrought impetuosity of his companion would not be long in yielding to the privations and toil of a midsummer journey across the Nefood. Come what might, he would not be the first to cry, "Enough!" or hang back when the other gave the signal of forward.

Meanwhile, Alkamah was overdoing both his work and himself. The sufferings of his Hejaz captivity and venturous escape, followed by a long period of constant depression of mind, and hopeless longing, had long since lowered his natural vigour to a degree unnoticed, because gradually brought on by those around him, and utterly unsuspected by himself. He was no longer the Alkamah of three years before, though he thought himself such when setting out from Roweydah. Then the vehemence of impetuous love, reviving as it were from that fictitious tomb where it had so long been buried in despairing hopelessness, supplied him with an unreal strength, which deceived himself, and in some measure his companion. And even when this began to yield to days of devouring heat, and sleepless nights of march, its place was taken and the delusion kept up by a restless impatience, growing every hour as the distance increased behind them and lessened before; so that he took no account of weariness, either in himself, or his foster-brother, or,—what is usually the uppermost care in an Arab wayfarer's mind,—in the beasts that carried them; but pressed

on as if drawn—and so in truth he was—by an attraction all the more irresistible because its influence had been suspended so long.

So they went on together, crossing red sandslope after sandslope, heated sheets of rock, and dry flint-sprinkled plain, uncheered by the sight of a single habitation, even a Bedouin tent, and unrefreshed by a glimpse, though distant, of watered grove or green pasture. If any vegetation rustled beneath their camels' feet, it was only an occasional tuft of lank parched grass, that the spring rains had deluded three months before into misplaced existence, or the long, dry, snake-like creepers of the bitter colorynth; more rarely they sighted a lonely tamarisk, or a gnarled and stunted acacia shrub; here and there a bewildered locust on a hot stone, chirping madly after its missing companions, and once a couple of grey gaunt vultures, watching the travellers ominously from an overhanging ledge of rock, such were the only forms of life around. But from hour to hour, from heat to heat, the mirage spread before them the likeness of a vast and tranquil lake; at noon they seemed to be treading on its very shore, and about to enter its waters; towards evening it receded, shrunk away in shallow pools and was gone.

Still they held on, and now, after twelve days of dreary desert, they entered a more cheerful zone, the inner borderland between the Hejaz and the populous Kaseem. Here they found themselves traversing large tracts of pasture-ground, dotted with frequent clusters of black Bedouin tents and straggling droves of camels; little villages too appeared, each set off by its green patch of garden and date-grove, sloping down the hillock side, or extending in a narrow strip along some short-lived watercourse, which, after doing its little work of irrigation, hastened to lose itself in the porous soil. Pleasant resting-places to wanderers just escaped from the shelterless Nefood; but which Shebeeb and Alkamah, however much in need of repose and refreshment, generally passed by unvisited; for there was no friendliness to spare between the inhabitants of this country, the Southern Kaseem, and the natives of Nejd; and their reception, if not absolutely inhospitable, would have been at least

ungracious. They were accordingly obliged to keep to the open country, or, occasionally and with circumspection, the neighbourhood of the tents.

Shebeeb, however, enjoyed and benefited by the cooler breezes, and the refreshing influences of growth and life around; besides the advantages of purer water, and sometimes a draught of milk obtained from the herdsmen, with fresh lotus fruit and dates, all of which when opportunity offered, he took care to procure. But from these comparative comforts Alkamah derived no benefit, he hardly appeared so much as to notice them; and the only effect they produced on him was to heighten his impatience for pressing onward by night and by day. In vain his companion represented that they were now far beyond all danger of pursuit, and that a moderate degree of rest was necessary both for themselves and their camels; Alkamah, though really the one who most had need of it, paid no attention.

At last, on the fourteenth afternoon, there stood out, far away against the western horizon, a square grey outline; its real height was not above sixty feet, but it looked at least double as much in the refractive heat-haze; a dark streak on the blue ridge near it indicated the presence of a considerable extent of houses, or palm-trees, or both. Shebeeb, who had crossed this line of route before, though from a different direction, at once recognised the old fortress of Derey', the frontier stronghold of Kaseem. "Courage!" he said to his companion, "that is Derey'; more than half our journey is done; to-morrow we shall enter the limits of Kora', and a few days further will bring us to the valley of Nejaran."

It was more than time, for Alkamah's fictitious strength had, ever since they left the Nefood, and what was really the most difficult part of their task, behind them, given way to prolonged fatigue and privation, and now visibly diminished every hour. Long before noon he began to look around him restlessly for the solitary tree, or the hollow fringed with brushwood, which might indicate a suitable place for making the noontide halt; and when once lain down, he seemed almost unable to rise. Too weary for appetite, he turned from the food which his companion

sedulously set before him, and instead of eating, drank recklessly large draughts of discoloured and unwholesome water from the nearest pool on the way, however tainted; for summer was now at its height, and the supply of water furnished by the spring-rains was half-dried and full of impurities. Then, unrefreshed and uninvigorated, he would painfully remount, his pulse burning and his limbs trembling with fever, till he could scarcely keep his seat in the saddle. Symptoms which Shebeeb knew the import of, and observed with anxiety, and while doing his utmost—though indeed little could be done in circumstances like theirs—to support and cheer him up, he began seriously to fear lest his foster-brother should end his road and his life together before reaching the goal he sought.

One day, the seventeenth or eighteenth after their departure from Roweydah, the east wind blew by fits, the noon was burning in hot haze, and the sun glowed fiercer than ever through a thin red veil of mist; Alkamah, drowsy from exhaustion, reeled from side to side in his saddle; and Shebeeb, while keeping near him, and speaking to him to rouse and encourage from time to time, half expected every minute to see him fall from his dromedary to the ground, a fall that for one so worn and weak would very probably have been fatal. Looking about in every direction for any place where they could alight and rest sheltered from the heat, he perceived—for Alkamah was too far gone to observe anything—on a low ridge of rising ground near them to the right, traces of something like a path, faintly indicated in the gravelly sand, and leading up to a small solitary hut, framed with sticks interwoven with dried palm-leaves, "a fortunate chance," he thought, as he turned off the road in that direction. Alkamah, or his camel rather, for its rider had ceased to guide it, mechanically followed. On reaching the place, Shebeeb made the animals couch down, which they did readily enough, for they were almost as tired as their masters, though as uncomplaining, and advanced to the entrance of the hut. It was closed by a strip of cloth hung across it like a curtain within. Shebeeb stood without, and called, "Is any one here?" A woman's voice answered

from behind the curtain, "Who are you, and what do you want?"

"Travellers," answered Shebeeb, "in want of shelter." As he spoke the hanging was pushed aside, and an old woman, tall, meagre, upright, and poorly dressed, came out. The expression of her face was strange, almost wild, but not unpleasant. She repeated her question.

"Nothing, mother, but a couple of hours' shelter from the heat," rejoined Shebeeb, "and a little drink and food, if you have any by you, for my fellow-traveller." He pointed as he spoke to Alkamah, who, almost unconscious of what he did, had slipped rather than dismounted from the saddle, and had now lain down, regardless of the blazing sun, in the heated sand outside the door.

"In God's name, come in and welcome," said the mistress of the tent; "you are both of you my guests."

With much difficulty Shebeeb roused his foster-brother in some measure from the torpor that had already come over him, and having got him on his feet, supported him as he staggered like a drunken man into the hut. Once inside he seemed completely dazed by the cool and darkness, and without a word of salutation, or any notice of place or persons, would at once have stretched himself again as he was upon the floor. But his hostess was beforehand with him; making a sign to Shebeeb to hold him up for a minute, she quickly unrolled a piece of matting, caught down from where it was hanging a long strip of blue cloth, that was in fact an upper garment of her own; and having spread it on the mat, in the innermost corner of the hut, she made Alkamah lie down on it, and covered him over with his cloak. This done, she turned to Shebeeb.

"Welcome, my guests," she said; "I was waiting for you. That one lying in the corner there is Alkamah, son of old Aamir of Howazin, and you are Shebeeb, his foster-brother, son of Fahl; you have come from Roweydah in Nejd in search of the daughter of Malik, Selma, of the Benoo-Morad. But you will not find her, neither in Nejran nor yet in Yemen; she is there no longer, but in Yemamah, by the mountains of Hareek,

whither her husband, Okeyl, took her more than a year ago; they both are living there now."

"She is married to Okeyl! What, what is to be done now?" exclaimed Shebeeb, with an instinctive look towards the slumbering Alkamah, and, in his distress at learning as a certainty what he had feared all along, forgetting to wonder at his own and his companion's recognition by this old crone in so far distant a part of the country.

"So it is," continued the woman, glancing also at Alkamah; "your brother is too late for what he hopes, but in time for his destiny and hers. Go on; you will find her in Yemamah, and——" she stopped, listening to something outside.

"But who are you, mother, and where are you from? and how do you come to know all about us and our affairs? Were you in Nejd?" asked Shebeeb, who had now sufficiently recovered his presence of mind to feel curious, and even somewhat alarmed at so strange a recognition where it could least have been anticipated, and a knowledge evidently overpassing the limits of ordinary life.

The old woman made no answer, but pointed to the door of the hut, which at this moment was darkened by an entering figure. Shebeeb looked that way and saw in the entrance a girl, or a woman rather, for her age, judging by her appearance, must have been about twenty; her dress was that usual amongst the very poorest classes—a common dark-blue wrapper, cast over clothes of equally coarse materials; her hands and her ankles were adorned—if adornment it could be called—with thick clumsy rings of blackish glass, the cheapest of the cheap; no veil covered her head or face; her arms and feet were bare. But her form, though somewhat stout and muscular-looking for her sex and age, was graceful, and her bearing dignified; her complexion brilliant, her features perfect in their regularity, and glowing with health and vigour; while her large dark eyes, always lustrous, seemed from time to time to shoot out absolute sparks of fire. In her hand she carried a long thin switch of tamarisk.

Coming in, she went straight up to her mother and kissed her

hand, then turning to Shebeeb, greeted him by name. "You are here at last," she said; it is now three days since they told me that you and the other would come, and I have been looking out for you."

Shebeeb was about to ask who were the "they" alluded to, but without giving him time for question she went quickly up to the back part of the hut where Alkamah was tossing and turning in uneasy sleep; he had thrown the cloak from off him, his right arm was stretched out flat, and the fingers clutched vaguely at the sand. "Poor fellow!" she said, bending over him, "he has journeyed far and suffered much, but he has not far now to go." She spoke in a low voice, and to herself; but the sleeper turned over on his side, with his face to the wall, as if avoiding her gaze, though his eyes remained closed. Quietly she drew the cloak again over him, and left him.

Alkamah's foster-brother remained where he was, and silent, unable to speak or interfere; for there was something in the girl's manner that repressed question or remark. She for her part took no further notice of him, but sitting down by her mother, conversed with her for some time in an undertone. Then she rose, and bringing out from a corner of the hut some dried lotus-fruit in a wooden dish, with a few freshly baked pieces of unleavened bread, set them before Shebeeb, inviting him to eat. Next she roused up Alkamah, and gave him to drink out of a vessel containing water cooled and made pleasantly acid by a slight mixture of whey; he drank, and then, evidently refreshed, sat up and took his share of the food, whilst the old woman and her daughter, whom she called Jandeb, looked on.

After a slight meal and a few commonplace words exchanged with his hostess, Alkamah betook himself again to sleep; and Shebeeb, who was thoroughly tired, stretched himself out also for a little rest. Then Jandeb and her mother, rising noiselessly, went outside the hut, where they lighted a fire of sticks, and for two or three hours busied themselves with preparing a substantial supper for their guests. By the time everything was ready, the sun had neared the low horizon line, the east wind had given over, and a cool breeze blew from the north. Jandeb went into

the hut, and wakening Shebeeb, beckoned him to come out with her into the open air.

She led him behind the hovel to the top of the red ridge, and pointed to a low and half-withered bush that grew at the bottom of the further slope. "Do you see that?" she whispered. On a dead, barkless twig of the bush was perched a mottled crow, croaking continuously, and plucking madly at its own feathers, till they strewed the ground beneath—a hideous sight. Shebeeb flung a pebble at it; the creature fluttered and croaked more than ever, but did not quit the bough. Shuddering, he turned to Jandeb. "What does it mean?" he asked.

"Separation and untimely death."

Her eyes were fixed on the bird, which just then, with a choking cry, fell from its perch, and after a moment of convulsive fluttering, lay still and dead on the sand.

"Go back while you can," she continued to Shebeeb, "and do not mix yourself up with the bad luck of others. They cannot escape what has been written for them, but you have no need to share in it, as you may if you go on."

Shebeeb listened thoughtfully, then turned and gave a look towards the tent where Alkamah was lying.

"I cannot leave him now," he said; "he is my brother, and I have promised him to go with him to the end."

Once and again Jandeb repeated her warning, and once and again Shebeeb gave the same answer. The girl stood silent for a few minutes, searching his face with her eyes, then made him a sign to come nearer to her, and taking the two long curls which after the fashion of Nejd hung down on each side of his neck, stroked them out carefully in the palm of her hand, and knotted them afterwards.

"There," she said, "now do as you choose; you have nothing to fear, and he will want your help. I am grieved for him," she continued; "it is a hard fate, and he so young. But what can be done for him? Every man must reap the crop he has sown."

And with this she turned, as if about to re-enter the hut.

"In God's name, who are you? Are you a human being, or

a spirit?" exclaimed Shebeeb, afraid to question, but unable to restrain the words.

"Here," said the girl, and laughed, as she took his hand in hers, "that is a human hand of mine, is it not? If you want to know more, ask my mother—not that I expect she will tell you much; but that is her affair, not mine. For all that," she added quietly, "it will be as you have seen and heard; but you are safe."

Darkness was now coming on; she led the way back to the hut, lifted the hanging curtain, and went in. Shebeeb followed. They found Alkamah awake, and sitting up, with scarcely a trace of illness. The old woman was getting the supper ready; they all partook of it together, and then went and sat on the bank outside in the moonlight.

While there, Jandeb pointed out to them the direction of the path they were to take next day; instead of going further south, they were to turn nearly due west, and keep so. There was nothing to fear, she said; they would meet none but friends on the way; they might take their leisure, and rest themselves by the wells and in the villages as much as they chose. Lastly, she indicated the precise spot in Yemamah where Okeyl and his bride were to be found; and having done this, suddenly left them, and was gone, though where or how they could not imagine. In fact, she had already disappeared before they were well aware of her being no longer by their side.

Not less strange than these circumstances was Alkamah's indifference to them; nothing seemed to arouse in him either curiosity or surprise. It was as if from the first moment of his entering the tent a spell had been cast over him, which, while it calmed and restored him, dulled his mind and even his senses to everything around. While Jandeb described the journey that yet lay before them, he listened, but hardly ever questioned; and no sooner had she quitted them than he returned into the hut to sleep.

Shebeeb, left alone with the old woman, now entreated her to give him some explanation of the events of the day; and in particular of the sources whence her daughter derived her

extraordinary, and, he supposed, preternatural knowledge. The answer, made reluctantly, and only after repeated urgency on Shebeeb's part, was in substance as follows. Jandeb was her only child, by her husband, an Arab of Hodeyl, and up to seven years old had presented no special difference from other children of the same age, except that she was rather weak and sickly. One day her father went out alone into the desert to look after a stray camel, and was last seen by some Arabs in the neighbourhood of a deep and lonely valley, hemmed in by barren rocks, and commonly believed to be haunted by evil and malicious spirits. Anyhow, he never returned; he had disappeared without a trace; not even an article of his clothing, or a foot-print, was found to indicate his fate. But it was reported that his voice had long after been heard at night, calling out among the rocks; and hence he was supposed to have been carried off by the spirits of the place. Shortly after this event, his daughter Jandeb, who was sleeping in the tent at noon, started up, saying that her father called her, and went out, no one knew whither. Next day, about the same hour she returned, changed in appearance, healthy, laughing, and strong, but refused to tell where she had been, or what had happened to her. Reports of her being in frequent communication with unseen beings soon spread abroad, till both she and her mother found it impossible to remain in comfort amid their own tribes: hence the isolation in which they had now lived for several years, though well off, thanks to the possession of a large flock of sheep, which, with the help of a shepherd, they tended in a pasture close by.

More than this, she could not, or would not tell. The night passed over in its quiet beauty; and early the next morning Alkamah, much reinvigorated, with his companion, took leave of their old hostess, and set out, with a certainty the more, and a hope the less, on the path which Jandeb had the evening before indicated to them. The girl herself was not present when they mounted in the dawn, or, at any rate, did not appear; her mother alone was by. But that same day, at noon, when they were already far advanced on their easterly route, Shebeeb saw, though his companion did not, a figure, bearing the semblance of

Jandeb herself, and of more than human size, standing on an isolated rock by the left of the way, and pointing with a rod in its hand towards Yemamah. The camels started, and became almost unmanageable, then hurried on. When Shebeeb looked back, there was no living thing in sight.

PART III.

AFTER leaving the hut, Alkamah and his companion, or rather guide, continued their journey for twelve days more, going to the East. They were now in a poor, but by no means uninhabited region; and seldom found themselves for many hours together out of sight of either a plantation, or a garden, or a group of huts, occasionally even a walled village. Nor had they anything here to apprehend from positive ill-will on the part of the inhabitants, between whom and those of upper Nejd there was habitually too little intercourse for either friendliness or enmity. Shelter from the heat, whether under trees or beneath cottage roofs, was easily to be had; while of water, though tepid and somewhat brackish, there was seldom a deficiency, for there are many wells, and at short intervals, in this sandy tract. Unfortunately, the tribes of these valleys, the Arabs, of Bishr and Dowasir, at all times a niggardly and uncourteous race, though not absolutely refusing the necessary hospitality, supplied it grudgingly; and showed themselves always readier to speed the parting than to welcome the coming guest.

Both the travellers' condition, since their halt in Jandeb and her mother's cabin, had undergone a great change, alike in body and mind. Shebeeb had become and remained henceforth stronger, more cheerful, more ready for exertion every way than before; his spirits were raised; from time to time he even sang —if that most inharmonious of all noises that an Arab herdsman makes, when he imagines himself musical, can be called singing —above all, he was more sedulously alive to every want of his foster-brother's, and assumed a constant care of him, amounting almost to authority.

Alkamah's state warranted this, for the sudden renovation of his strength and health consequent on Jandeb's influence while present, had, with distance passed away almost as suddenly, and was succeeded by a weakness and exhaustion that grew on him and increased every hour. His courage too was broken; the certainty of Selma's marriage, hardly realised when first heard of, now sank by degrees deeper and deeper into his mind, and, while it did not calm his intense longing for meeting her again, took away all hopeful prospects from the idea of that meeting. "I am dying," he would often say to Shebeeb, "and I desire nothing else; only die I cannot till I have seen her, she herself must set me free, and the sooner the better, would it were to-day. Death perhaps may reunite what life has parted; she will not, I feel, long remain separated from me." And in this mood he pressed forward with redoubled impatience, as if fearing to be too late, his mental excitement increasing while the term of his journey drew nearer. Sustained by this alone, he no longer faltered, but sat firm and upright on his camel, though each day more gaunt and shadow-like; looking neither right nor left, but straight before him, and indifferently abandoning all care of food or rest to his companion's arrangement.

Twelve days of road, along the broad bush-sprinkled gulley that crosses more than half the peninsula; on their left the mountain ranges of Nejd, and low undulating slopes of pasture-land, subsiding into desert, on their right. But on the afternoon of the thirteenth day they saw before them, low down in the far haze, a jagged blue line, with purple stains of shadow; the rocky hills of Hareek; at their base, though hidden as yet from sight, stretched—this Shebeeb knew—the pastures, the fertile plains, the groves, gardens, and populous villages of Yemamah. Gladly he pointed out the fantastic horizon-fringe to his foster-brother, and told him that there lay their goal.

But next morning they had again lost sight of it, for now they entered the intervening region, an intricate labyrinth of narrow valleys and small abrupt hills, with frequent groves, which might almost by courtesy be called forests, of acacia and tamarisk; puzzling to travellers, but affording welcome shadow

from the midday sun. Here were no human habitations, large or small; not even a chance shepherd or Bedouin, from whom they could enquire whether they were on the right track or not; had Alkamah been alone, it would have gone hard with him to find his way. Shebeeb, however, knew that not far from them on the left, though concealed from view by a close succession of steep hills, commenced the level grounds of Yemamah; but he kept his knowledge to himself, lest his comrade's impatience on learning it should urge their entering abruptly on the open country, where they could not fail to be recognised for strangers, and would thus naturally become the objects of a curiosity which might endanger the attainment of the scope of their journey, and even their lives. Never could they less afford to be incautious than now.

In this manner at a slackened pace, and often stopping to consider their direction, they wandered on among the hills for three days; by the morning of the fourth they had reached the verge of the broken country, which here changed its character, passing into the bare sheer rocks of Hareek. They had, in their ignorance of the precise localities, approached much nearer than they thought to the villages behind this dreary screen; but Shebeeb was growing anxious, for their slight supply of food and water had almost failed. Nor did he see, among the crags overhead and the dry sand under their feet, any prospect of replenishing their store. All at once, looking round at Alkamah, he perceived from his face and manner that a deadly faintness had come over him, so that he was evidently incapable of proceeding any further. What was to be done? Lingering where they were was out of the question: advancing equally so. Then Shebeeb noticed on their right the entrance of a narrow gorge, which his eye, accustomed to the peculiarities of scenery like this, knew must in all probability lead to some secluded spot, where his foster-brother could rest a while without risk of being discovered till his faintness might have passed off and his strength rallied. It was indeed, though he knew it not, Alkamah's predestined resting-place, but one he was never to leave more. Hither Shebeeb led the unresisting camels; a chill

came over him as they passed into the shadow of the overhanging crag, and he shivered. On the sand near the entry, a whitened skull lay in a corner of the rock. Alkamah saw it, and smiled. "A companion," he said, "he will not refuse me a share of his resting-place."

They were now fairly within the valley, shut in on every side by iron brown crags, and in front of them the cavern at the further end. At its mouth they halted their camels and dismounted. "This is just the place," thought Shebeeb, but, before going into the cave himself, he prudently took up a stone from the many lying about, and threw it in as far as he could, to rouse any wild beast or dangerous snake that might have made its lair in the cool darkness. But when the ringing echoes had died away, all was silent again; nothing came out or stirred. He tried a second, the result was the same. Then, though still cautiously, he entered, a knife in hand, and explored the hollow. When his sight, at first baffled, became accustomed to the gloom, he found that he was in an expanding vault, of more width than depth, high enough to allow of standing upright, and, to his great satisfaction, without any crevasses or smaller openings that he could discover leading further into the rock. Within the cave itself there was hiding room enough, a dozen men at least might easily have concealed themselves in its dark recess.

Having made sure of all this, he came out and found Alkamah half-seated, half-leaning against the rock close by, but helpless, and like one at his last gasp. With some difficulty he lifted him up in his arms and carried him into the cavern. There he laid him as best he could out of sight from the entrance, and bringing in the saddles, placed one of them for a pillow under his companion's head. Next he fetched the nearly empty water-skins, and poured what little water remained, a muddy draught into a wooden cup which Jandeb's mother had given him, this he put by Alkamah's side, and within his reach, along with a few dry dates, the only remnants of their provisions for the way. Having done this, he left the cave, intending without loss of time to explore the neighbourhood, in view of help, or at least, of information.

Keeping his steps on rock and stone wherever possible, and carefully effacing all traces of his own or the camel's footprints in the patches of light sand between, he stole forth, and once again in the main valley gazed anxiously about him in every direction; but no sign of man or beast was discoverable anywhere. Hardly knowing whether to be pleased or disappointed at this loneliness, he bethought him of climbing the rocks on the higher side, the left, whence he expected to command a more extensive view. They were well-nigh precipitous; but sure of hand and foot, he had soon reached the summit, and looked over. To his surprise, his eye rested on a green plain immediately below, coming up to the very foot of the mountain, and stretching far away north, almost to the horizon verge. Here and there its gently undulating lines were broken by dark masses of palm-groves; and not very far off on one side stood a group of tents, the very ones perhaps, so he thought, that they had travelled so far to reach. Nearer, however, in view was a good-sized village, girdled with gardens and watered fields, and this he determined first to visit, as offering him the best chance of procuring some kind of refreshment for his helpless and stricken companion; here too he did not doubt to learn the truth or otherwise of what Jandeb had told them; and to gain some notion of the means they had best adopt, should the encampment in sight prove to be really that of Okeyl.

While Shebeeb was thus employed, Alkamah, who had returned to consciousness, lay still in the cave, too feeble to rise, and well aware that he had reached the halting-place that was to be his last. His thoughts, meanwhile, wandered back to Batn-Darih, and the camp of Benoo-Morad by the walls of Roweydah. However much the knowledge of Selma's after-marriage had grieved, it had not surprised him; it had not even weakened his conviction that she was, in heart and soul at least, faithful to him now as then; the Selma of three years back. He called to mind the love of those past days, past, yet ever present—the look, the smile, the meetings, the promises, the endearments, the mutual pledge, the embrace at parting; and could not now, even had he striven to do so, picture her to

himself other than she then had been. If in after days she had indeed conferred her hand on another, it must, it could only have been, under the conviction that his own was no longer able to clasp it; she might be the wife of Okeyl, but not for that could she have ceased to be the love, the only love, of Alkamah. So his fancy imaged her. Nor was the image wholly, or in the main untrue. For in truth while hope had yet been hers, she had resisted every attack on her plighted constancy, and nothing but the certitude, it seemed, that her hope had perished with her lover's life had reconciled her to admit her cousin's urgent suit.

While thus thinking, his gaze wandered at random round the rock-walls of the cave, now dimly visible in the gloom to which he had become in a measure accustomed; then rested on the metallic glimmer of his silver signet-ring. It was the same with which she had toyed at their last meeting; the same she had jestingly promised to reclaim some future day. The same—but now, lest it should slip off the emaciated finger for which it was all too large, he had been obliged to wind it tightly round and fasten it with a twist of thread. Would her fingers ever touch it again? they must—they should! As he looked at it he gained strange hope and strength from the sight of this unfulfilled yet unbroken link between him and her; soon he thought the meaning would be accomplished—the promise redeemed. Patiently he awaited the evening and the return of his foster-brother, through hours that seemed neither long nor short, few nor many; too much under the dominion of one unchanging idea to keep account of event or time.

Meanwhile, the sunlight, which only for a short interval at noon could find its way to illuminate the sand-floor of the narrow valley, had withdrawn upwards from rock to rock, till it lingered on the highest splinters alone, then left them. Darkness was about to set in when Shebeeb re-entered the cave, bringing with him from the village provisions that by contrast might half be reckoned delicacies, and, what Alkamah most desired, a supply of fresh cool water. But of the food he was scarcely able to take any share, and it remained almost entirely for Shebeeb, who, having rendered his companion every service

in his power, now sat down by his side to eat, and to give his tidings.

They were good ones on the whole. From the actual place of half-concealment to the nearest village, that of Jorf, was a distance of less than two hours; and the pasture-grounds occupied by Okeyl the Yemenee, as the villagers called him, were not much further off, in fact the herdsmen were in the habit of coming to Jorf, for barter or purchase. Okeyl was well known to all; they described him as wealthy, generous, and, though a stranger, popular. He had arrived, they said, more than a year before, with a large retinue of followers, shepherds, and the like; besides camels and flocks in great abundance, and had settled on a piece of land assigned him by the native chiefs of Benoo-Tameem, with whom he was on the most friendly terms. What had been the precise reason for his quitting Yemen, and establishing himself in Yemamah, was not generally known, probably some dispute with his own kinsmen about marriage matters, for he had brought with him, they said, a wife of his own, that is the Morad, tribe, but no children. It was also said that he had often been urged to divorce his wife, and marry another, but that he had always refused to do so, perhaps this had something to do with his departure from Nejran. Lastly, they said that his wife was renowned for her beauty, and that all spoke well both of him and her.

Alkamah listened, and his imagination filled up the outlines of the story with much that was unconjectured by Shebeeb. But now came the main question, difficult to answer, what was to be done next? They had in one sense reached the goal, yet in another seemed further from it than before. While in the vigour of unimpaired strength and youth, Alkamah had planned many plans, dreamed many dreams, and might, not unlikely, have carried them into effect too; for many a lover in Arabia, denied his wish by family opposition, has carried off triumphantly the loved one by force of arms, or died at her feet in the attempt; and Alkamah, whose courage and passion were well equal to either result, would have had precedents in plenty for both. But now, unable not only to mount a horse and wield a sword,

but even to move a limb or rise from the ground, and with his life itself at the ebb, which he well knew has no flow after it, these were mere imaginings, and must as such be abandoned. All that could practically be effected would be to acquaint Selma with the fact of his being in the neighbourhood, a weary dying man, and to leave the rest to woman's ingenuity and woman's love. But it must be done quickly.

Midnight came, and as nothing could be attempted before morning, they must needs wait its breaking; Shebeeb in the deep sleep that follows fatigue. Alkamah would fain have slept too, but the fever returned; and when dawn came, it found him weaker than before. Shebeeb saw, with alarm, the change in his companion's face, and when he had tended him to the best of his abilities for a little while, hastened to set out without loss of time on fresh research, justly thinking that there was danger in delay. Nor was he long absent; chance or destiny favoured his endeavours, and shortly after noonday he returned, and with him another. This was a somewhat undersized man, lightly built, and of dusky, almost negro complexion, which, with the striped mantle hanging down over his shoulders, announced him at first sight for a native of Nejran or Yemen. It was in fact one of Okeyl's own herdsmen, whom Shebeeb had fallen in with just as he was entering the village of Jorf, and had persuaded to turn back and accompany him to the cave.

Within it Alkamah was lying in miserable plight, drowsy and wandering in mind, heedless of everything. But the approach of footsteps roused him a little; and when his dim eyes had distinguished the unaccustomed form that stood by Shebeeb, he conjectured what had happened, and at once came to himself. Eager to learn more, he even managed to lift himself on his elbow from the ground; while the herdsman stared in surprise, almost terror, at the wild and ghastly appearance of the death-stricken man before him.

"You, brother, are one of Okeyl the Yemenee's retainers, of Benoo-Morad, are you not?" asked Alkamah, in a faint though distinct voice. The herdsman answered in the affirmative.

A minute's silence followed, while Alkamah collected his

strength for further questioning; and Shebeeb, taking up the discourse, related the circumstances under which he had met the man who had that very morning seen Okeyl at the door of the tent, where was his family, meaning his wife. This the herdsman confirmed.

"Do you ever," Alkamah again asked, articulating the words with difficulty, "come near"—he could not say "your master's wife," but—"the daughter of Malik, so as to be able to speak with her?"

"Often," replied the man. Had so strange a question been put under any other circumstances, he would certainly have been startled by it, and either would have hesitated to answer it, or not have answered at all. But there was in Alkamah's appearance, in his manner, his look, his tone, something of authority—the authority that earnestness combined with much suffering never fail to give—that admitted neither of dalliance nor bargain. So feeling himself in a manner constrained not barely to answer, but to explain fully, he went on. "I have at present charge of the milch-goats belonging to the camp; and it is my duty every evening at sunset to bring a bowl of fresh milk for my master's family to her tent. If any of the servants happen to be by, I give it them to take in; but very often I find her outside the tent by herself, and then, if she asks me, I fill a cup and hand it her to drink."

Without putting any further question, or saying a word, Alkamah slowly unwound the thread twisted round his finger, and drew off the signet ring. Beckoning the herdsman to come close to his side, he put the ring into his open hand, and said, "Brother, when next she asks you for a draught of milk, slip this ring into the bowl first; it will bring good to you and to her. I charge you do it." And having thus spoken, he laid his head back upon the saddle that served it for pillow, and closed his eyes.

The herdsman remained standing, turning the silver circlet round and round in the palm of his hand, and looking uneasily at it; for he was at a loss to understand what might be the meaning of such a commission, and more than half afraid lest

some harm or treachery might be intended by it, to which his compliance would give effect.

He would have inquired of the giver, but from him he soon perceived no further explanation was to be had; he therefore looked instead towards Shebeeb, who, perceiving what was in his mind, said whatever might tend to reassure him; carefully confirming in particular Alkamah's hint as to the handsome reward he might expect for himself, and insisting that no mischief of any kind could possibly follow, either to his mistress or to others, only good. But when the man went on to ask what was the sick man's name, who he was, whence he came, what had brought him here, what was the hidden meaning of the ring, and so forth, Shebeeb, after a few evasive answers, cut him short; enjoining him to take the first opportunity of fulfilling what he had been told to do, and in the meantime to say not a word to any person whatever, either where he had been, or what he had seen or heard. Of all this he exacted and obtained a solemn promise; and then, with a "God speed," sent the simple fellow away.

This over, he turned to his brother-in-law, intending to talk the matter over with him, by way of comfort and encouragement. But on approaching him, he perceived by the calm and regular breathing that Alkamah had fallen into a quiet sleep, from which it would be a pity to rouse him. So he sat down at his side, thoughtful, and waiting what the events of the day might bring forth, till night came, and all was dark.

Without, on the plains of Yemamah, it was the full-aged year; dates hung in ripe clusters from the dusty trees; great melons were yellow in the gardens, grain of every sort had already been gathered in, and the shrubs and grass, except, it might be, in the immediate neighbourhood of some flowing watercourse, already wore the brown and dried-up tints that told of the summer season advanced to its hottest. No one now, except those whose occupations compelled them to be continually out of doors, remained in the fields while the blazing sun rode high in heaven, and even those most inured to its beams sought to protect themselves as much as possible from them, under some overhanging rock or sheltering tree, not venturing out of their shelter unless

when it became absolutely necessary to do so. The very village roofs and walls, always baked and dry, looked doubly so in the white glare; the gates stood wide open, but for hours together no figure passed them, entering or issuing out. Meanwhile the tents—there were about twenty of them, large and small—pitched by Okeyl of Morad for himself and his followers, stood in their places, black, silent, and seemingly deserted almost all the day through; no living creature was to be seen moving about amongst them; the men were for the most part away, either with the herds on the grazing-grounds, or under cover of house or garden in one or other of the neighbouring villages; while the women remained within the canvas shelter of the camp, occupied in household duties, or idle, chattering, or drowsy, as the case might be.

Then the daily scene would change, and as the declining sun hurried downwards to the jagged lines of fantastic rock and mountain on the west, and the palm-groves dotted over the surface of the level lands cast each its streak of shadow long and broad across the plain, while the still air was thick with the golden motes of the summer evening, the life that had lurked concealed from the terrible heat would re-assert itself and come forth, at first timidly, as it were, then more boldly, in proportion as its oppressor weakened and withdrew. Comers and goers studded the paths, denser towards the village gates; the open lands were cheerful with herds, flocks, and men moving across them; and between the tents many forms, some male, some female, the latter more numerous just before sunset, the former after it, might be seen passing in and out, hither and thither; or seated about the encampment in groups, talking, laughing, and watching the day go down.

That evening, on a carpet spread close by the entrance of the principal tent, distinguished from the rest by its greater size, as well as by the ornamental red fringes about its hangings, sat Selma, the daughter of Malik, the first love of Alkamah, the wife of Okeyl. No longer a girl, but in the full perfection of married womanly beauty; the beauty that confers and justifies the completeness of repose in every part, every feature—in the

dark eye, the heavy tresses, the rounded outlines, the shapely form. Three years had added much to her loveliness, all that the hours add to the bud when they expand it into the flower; yet they had taken away something too, for now, in place of the sportive cheerfulness that had once sparkled in her every look and even gesture, they had cast over her, it seemed, the veil of a certain seriousness, almost sadness, which again did not become her beauty less than the garment of her girlish joyousness had done, perhaps even more.

This seriousness, sadness it could hardly be called, was due to several causes, but chiefly to three, not equally depressing in character, but none of them ever wholly absent from her mind. First, though least in weight, was her separation from the home of her birth, and the companions of her childhood, now left far away in Nejran, and from whom she was parted by what, in a land where means of communication are rare and casual, might seem an almost immeasurable distance. And though there had been much of which she might justly have complained in the conduct of her parents and relatives towards her, and even the ultimate sundrance from them had been principally brought about by their own unkindness, yet they were her parents still, and she could not wholly cease to regret them. Next, and heavier to bear, came the apprehension, the anxiety that rose with her early every morning and lay down last with her at night, lest her want of children,—for two years of married life had passed, and still there was no sign, and, by this time, hardly an expectation, of offspring,—should sooner or later alienate from her the affection of her husband, now her only stay.

But under and besides all this, always present, though not always consciously felt, was a third and deeper melancholy; the self-accusing regret for the tall, handsome, brave, true-souled lad she had loved and left in Nejd. She thought of him indeed as of one dead: and yet, even while thus thinking, she reproached herself for having yielded to those who had persuaded her to think of him and to act as if he were so, and to accept another in his stead; she felt that by so doing she had been in a manner faithless to her first love; and when the recurring thought

"Perhaps he is still alive, still loves me," from time to time came over her, she did not know whether to wish to believe it true or not. How far too his love for her had been the cause of whatever misadventure had since befallen him, of his joining the Hejaz foray, and its fatal results, she did not distinctly know—on these topics her relatives had of course carefully kept her in the dark; but she could not otherwise than conjecture much of what really had been, and this conjecture led her to blame herself and to regret him the more. Then the fancy would cross her that had Aamir's son been really, as reported, dead, his image must by this time have faded from her memory, or at least grown indistinct: now, on the contrary, it haunted her day and night, increasingly fresh and vivid, yet gave her no comfort; how should it, and she another man's wife? Meanwhile her husband, who loved her fondly, observed with pain that her melancholy, which at first had not wholly surprised him, did not, as he had hoped, wear off with time; and, unsuspecting the persistence of the third cause, attributed it mentally to the first, and especially the second. So to remove the effect of these, he did all that steady kindness and affection could suggest to remove her anxieties and regrets, and succeeded in rendering her, not indeed absolutely happy, but, unless in a few moments of capricious depression, calm and resigned.

They had been now for more than a year settled in Yemamah, on the lands belonging to the community and town of Wadih, one of the principal centres in this neighbourhood; and Okeyl, who was generous, prudent, helpful, and brave, had been speedily admitted among themselves by the chiefs of Benoo Tameem, the lords of Yemamah, almost as if he had been a born-brother of their race. They might hope also, and not unreasonably from an Arab point of view, that the want of children from his first wife, might ultimately induce him to look out for a second from amongst the daughters of their own tribe. The girls of Nejd were not, they said, inferior in beauty or other merits to those of Yemen; and few parents but were ready to court an alliance in every respect advantageous both to themselves and to the land at large. Their hopes remained unfulfilled; to all

hints, proposals even, whether conveyed by the mustachioed lips of grave fathers or the coquettish glances of willing maidens, Okeyl continued impassive; he loved his wife, and not even the prospect of an heir could prevail on him to grieve her with the infliction that of all others she most dreaded, a rival or a successor.

It was not however the thought of these things, nor of her home in Yemen, nor, in any distinct form at least, of love past and gone, that rendered the wife of Okeyl more pensive than usual, as this evening she sat, alone and silent, by the entry of her tent; which, at her desire, had been arranged facing north, to receive the cooler breeze, she said,—perhaps it blew from Nejd. A maid approached, and began to speak; Selma, oppressed with vague melancholy, and utterly undesirous of conversation, hastened to send the girl away on some trifling errand to another tent in the camp. Again alone she raised her head, looked around, and sighed, she could not have said why. A little later, and the sun's edge rested on the horizon line, when she saw a figure coming towards her, black in the level rays; and recognised her husband's herdsman, bringing the customary tribute of milk for the evening. He was bringing something else too; but of that no foreboding warned her. In a few minutes more he had reached the tent, and seeing none of the servants by stood hesitating for an instant. It was an opportunity; should he take it, and at once fulfil his commission? Unknowingly Selma herself decided the question; she felt thirsty, and beckoned him towards her; he drew near and stood before her; then, at a second sign, he poured out some of the milk from the goatskin that contained it into a little black-wood vessel, prettily inlaid with silver ornaments, and held it towards her. But while doing this he had slipped, unperceived by her,—for her thoughts were elsewhere, and she took no account of him or of his movements,—the signet ring which Alkamah had given him, into the full cup, and having done this stood by, with as much curiosity as his stolid nature was susceptible of, to watch the result.

Selma stretched out her hand, took the cup, and almost

drained it, but at the moment of removing it from her lips, she thought she heard something slip back with a slight chinking noise to the bottom of the bowl; and examining what it could be, she perceived the glitter of metal through the shallow remnant of milk. Surprised, she drew it out, looked attentively at it, and inspected the signet closely, once, twice; and knew the token.

She turned deadly pale; a faintness came over her, and for an instant all was blank. Yet she did not lose her presence of mind, though the effort she made to rally herself, and to conceal every outward sign of what she felt, made her tremble violently from head to foot. Then, forcing herself to look steadily up, she said, in a voice meant to be calm, but which sounded strangely hoarse and unlike her own, "How did you come by this? You put it in the cup; who gave it you?"

Had the man been other than what he was, something very much on a level for intelligence with the animals he had the charge of, he might there on the spot have guessed all, or nearly all, from his mistress's fixed look, her altered voice, her strained composure. But being what he was, he surmised nothing, except that there was something serious in the matter, and that he had best tell the truth. So he answered by relating, not over clearly at first, how that morning, outside the village under the western hill, he had met with a stranger, apparently a traveller from the Upper Nejd, who had talked with him and taken him to a cave in the mountain near, where he had found a sick man all alone. That from this latter he had received the ring, the same now in her hand, with directions how he was to give it her, and promises. These he had by no means forgotten, but on the contrary amplified in the telling of substantial reward if he succeeded in doing so.

Thus he told his story, lamely and confusedly enough. But Selma, though certain in the main from the first, was determined to know all, the worst as the best, without leaving the possibility of a doubt or error, and questioned the man repeatedly, till she had learnt every particular that he could relate; and Alkamah lay before her, worn and weary in the cave, distinctly

imaged to her mind, with Shebeeb by him, soon recognised for the messenger and confidant of three summers before. And now! To hear was torture; yet she compelled herself, and would hear all. Only while the discourse lasted she kept glancing nervously round, in fear lest anyone should come up and put an end to her inquiries before she had had time to learn the whole; but chance favoured her, and for several minutes nobody approached that way. At last, among a group of figures slowly moving towards them she distinguished her husband—yes, it was certainly her husband—though still far off, and with a sign, for speaking had now grown almost impossible to her, she dismissed the puzzled herdsman, by no means satisfied with the result of his day's adventure. When his back was turned Selma took the ring, kissed it again and again, and hid it in her breast; then rising slowly, for she felt stiff and heavy in every limb, re-entered the tent. There she lighted a lamp, sent away the servants, who, as is always the case, seemed to be more than usually attentive when least wanted, and sat by herself, one moment benumbed and dazed, the next all impatience, waiting till her husband should come in.

From the distance where her anxious eyes had perceived him to the tent it was not a quarter of an hour's walk. Why then was he so long in coming? an hour, two hours surely had passed, and she was still alone. A horrible dread came over her. Could it be that he had met the shepherd by the way, have questioned him? have learnt something — everything? Perhaps at this very moment he had gone full of deadly jealousy to the cave—perhaps—she shook the thought from her, rose, went to the door of the tent, and looked out. The full moon had risen in splendour: how quietly it was shining over the plain, how silent! Nothing stirred. Not far away on the glistering level she saw a broad black patch with white specks at intervals glimmering through; they were the roofs of the village of Jorf. Behind it rose the mountain wall, gigantic in the deceptive light and shadow. Lifeless, unfeeling rock; was indeed *he*, he from Nejd, lying helpless, hopeless, behind that rugged screen? and all for her! Was he thinking of her? was

he not perhaps beyond all thought? dying? already dead? What should she do? She longed, longed with a torturing intensity that might have atoned for any past want of faithfulness—that would, had Alkamah known it, have effaced from his mind every thought of his own sufferings for her sake—to hasten to him that instant, to be with him, to support his head in her arms, to comfort him with words of love; but no, it could not be, she must wait her husband; would he then never come? She looked to right, to left, eagerly over the silvered plain, fearfully to the mountain, not a moving speck was there. An age seemed to pass over her; higher and higher rose the moon, small, white, and dazzling in the east, yet no sign.

At last—after how long?—a group of figures came into sight from behind a small rising ground, where, out of her view, though not far off, they had, it seemed, been seated talking together. Now, as they separated from each other, everyone going his way home, she strained her gaze to distinguish them in the uncertain moonlight. Her husband was among them; soon he had disentangled himself from the rest, and was slowly approaching the tent. One horror at least was off her mind, that leisurely step betokened no knowledge of anything unusual on his part. She dreaded, though she had made up her mind to do it, telling him the tale; but infinitely more did she dread his learning it from any other lips than her own. If the first to speak she could, and would, throw herself on his tried generosity of heart; it was her only chance, *his* only chance; but the avowal must be of her own free making. She was not mistaken in her calculation. Resolute now, she hastened back into the inner tent to await her husband there.

The summer nights about the full moon, bright, warm, and still, are specially devoted by Arab custom to sociable conversation, and Okeyl, not in the least suspecting what awaited him on his return home, had on this occasion lingered even later than usual in talk, till it was almost midnight. Sauntering along, and stopping now and then to enjoy the pleasant air, he reached the tent, where he expected to find his wife long since gone to rest. But when he put aside the curtain he found her,

to his astonishment, seated on the floor in the streaks of moonlight that entered between the joinings of the canvas, for the lamp had been extinguished some time before. She was crouched together, her head bowed down on her knees, her face hidden in her hands. She neither moved nor uttered a word when he came in; only he thought, and was not mistaken, that he saw a shiver run over her as he entered.

He went up to her, and stood a moment at her side; she raised her face, and looked half vacantly at him, but said nothing. Doubting whether she was really awake, or under the influence of some strange night-mare, he laid his hand on hers. It was cold, icy-cold; but while he pressed it, a tear of scalding heat fell on his fingers. Now he knew that she was awake, but unhappy. Something must have happened. "Selma, dearest, what is the matter with you?" he anxiously asked. "Who—what has been grieving you?"

Strongly constituted in body and mind, he was a man of more than ordinary self-possession. Yet he started back in something not far from terror, when she sprung up suddenly, as though she had been struck through with a knife, and seized his arm.

"Oh, Okeyl—oh, my cousin," she exclaimed, "you do not know; but you must know. Listen to me,"—and her grasp tightened convulsively on his shoulder—"*he*—he of Roweydah is here, is close by us; he is dying, and it is I who have killed him. He did not perish, as they said, in the Hejaz; he escaped alive; he returned home, and they told him lies; they told him that I was dead, I am sure they did. I knew they would. And now he has learned the truth; and he has come here all the way from Nejd to seek me, and he is lying in a cave of these mountains—ill, dying; and, O God!"—Here she broke down with a hysterical gasp, and fell, writhing and sobbing on the ground.

She had not mentioned Alkamah's name; but her husband had at once understood whom she meant—who was near; and his face, at first pale, gradually grew dark in the moonlight. Her words, and still more her tears, her gestures, her sobs, her agony of grief, not only told of an event, startling and em-

barrassing enough in itself, but further—there was no disguising it from himself—nor had she so much as attempted to conceal it—implied, or, rather, clearly showed in the speaker all the vehemence of a passion long smothered, but never extinguished; and now, flaring up in full force and heat. And this was his wife; and he, to whom this revelation was made, was her husband! Yet, whatever the promptings of his first impulse may have been, he speedily mastered them; resolved, even before she had done speaking, that neither word nor sign should escape him that might add to her misery, not though the cause of that misery was her love for another. He saw the woman he himself had loved so long, so truly—his wife, wretched, prostrate at his feet; and he saw, would see, nothing else. What, however, to say he could not so quickly determine—so merely uttering her name in a tone of more than usual tenderness and affection, he stooped over her, to raise her up from where she lay.

But before he had yet clasped her, she half rose, unaided, and throwing her arms round his knees, cried out, "Forgive me, forgive me, Okeyl, my husband, or do to me as you will; I deserve the worst; but have mercy on the poor lad, who has come, knowing nothing of you, nothing of my marriage, so far; and who has suffered so much—is still suffering. Oh, for God's sake, do not deny me; let me go and speak to him, see him this once only—only this once—I must, I owe it to him—is it not I who have been the cause of all his misery? It will not be for long—once only."

And here her voice caught, and a burst of passionate sobbing again overpowered her. But her hold did not unclasp, and she looked earnestly up in her husband's face; her own was now flushed and swollen, and her eyes drowned in tears.

Gently he unloosed her hands, raised her up, held her a moment to his breast, and kissed her. Then, gently still, he placed her on a cushion leaning against a side-pole of the tent; and, after soothing her with word and caress all he could, and himself drying her tears, called for water. One of the maids, who had been roused from sleep by her mistress's wailing sobs,

and was lying with eyes open, wondering what it meant, brought it in a cup, and would have remained by waiting, had not Okeyl immediately ordered her off, telling her to go outside the tent and watch at some little distance, lest any curious passer by might loiter about to pry or listen. The maid gone, he took the bowl and gave his wife to drink, holding it to her lips, for her own hands shook too much to grasp it. Gradually her agitation calmed; she smiled faintly in her husband's face, took his hand, and kissed it.

Seeing that the first violence of excitement had subsided, Okeyl judged the moment favourable for putting the questions that he could not otherwise than ask; his voice was serious, but there was no trace of harshness in its tone.

"He whom you were speaking of, dearest, is the youth, the son of Aamir of Howazin—Alkamah, is it not?"

"Yes," was the scarcely audible answer, uttered with her face hid on her husband's shoulder; he was now seated by her, holding one of her hands in his.

"But how do you know that he is really here? Tell me all about it. Do not be afraid. I will not refuse you anything that you may ask, only tell me all," continued Okeyl.

Without looking up, but clasping his fingers tightly in her own, Selma began her story, with much difficulty at first, but gathering strength and clearness as she went on.

Okeyl heard without interrupting, only making from time to time some slight sign or gesture to encourage her in the narration. When she had concluded it,—

"Selma," he said—and there was something in the earnestness of his voice that made her start, and raise her eyes for a moment, then quickly cast them down—"Selma, I pity you from my heart; I pity him too; yet would to God that these things had not happened. However, neither you nor he have anything to fear. I will do my best for him, for your sake, as though he were my brother. And, after a short pause, "Dearest Selma," he added, in a half-enquiring tone, as if expecting her to speak.

But of this she was at the moment incapable; her tears were falling fast, but they were no longer the tears of mere unmixed

pain; shame, gratitude, affection even, had a share in them; they were tears almost of relief. Yet she could not find heart to look her husband in the face, or at once to answer him.

"Dearest," continued Okeyl, "my sister, we are in the hands of God; he has ordained it thus, and I will not blame either of you. Do not go on crying thus; be comforted. Come what may, you shall see him, and speak to him to-morrow. He is your guest, and under your protection, and you are under mine. God guard us all." Then, attributing her continued silence to exhaustion—natural after such extreme excitement—for that it was the generosity of his own conduct which now overpowered her mind and voice had not entered his thoughts. "But midnight is now past," he said, "and you must have need of rest. Lie down, dearest, and sleep quietly, and without care, till morning; you will break down else."

She turned right towards him, and casting herself on his breast, passionately embraced him.

"O thanks! thanks! my dear, my noble husband," she cried out; "may God reward you!" Then a sudden fear seized her, and drawing back, she caught hold of his dress. "You will be gentle with him, Okeyl? you will not threaten him? you will not do him any harm? Promise me!" she exclaimed.

Her husband smiled slightly, a painful smile.

"I swear to you, by God Most High, I will treat him as though he were my own brother," he answered. "From me he shall hear nothing but good. Now do you lie down and rest yourself; morning is near."

Then, without summoning any of the servants, he himself spread a mattress on the floor, arranged the bed, and carefully laid her on it, where, wearied out as she was, by all she had gone through since sunset, she was in a few minutes fast asleep.

No sooner was Okeyl sure of this, than he stole silently out of the tent; and going to where several of his retainers slept, waked up one of them, and sent him off in quest of the herdsman who was in charge of the milch-goats belonging to the household. The man was soon found. When he came his master took him aside, and made him repeat the whole story

over again. Not a shadow of a doubt remained. It was Alkamah, the son of Aamir, and no other. This point made sure of, Okeyl ordered the herdsman to return at once, with all possible speed, to the cave, and to bring thence Alkamah's companion back with him, but as secretly as he could, and avoiding any one who might happen, even at that hour of night, to be on the way. He was also to take care not to alarm those in the cave; on the contrary, to give them every assurance of his master's good will and protection. He himself should be handsomely rewarded afterwards.

The man went on his errand, and Okeyl remained alone in the moonlight. He turned his steps back to the tent, but did not at once enter it, and, instead, remained a considerable time outside, thinking. Repellant as the reality was, he must face it. Long before, indeed, he had, in spite of himself, been in a measure aware how matters stood between his wife and the memory of her first lover; but, again and again he had said to himself it was only a memory, a fancy, a nothing; and it would be alike unworthy of him, and needlessly harsh to her, were he ever to make her any reproach on the subject, even so much as would be employed by his showing that he was aware of it. The son of Aamir was gone, and dead; of that he, like most others, was fully persuaded; and his remembrance, however cherished while fresh, would, in the natural course of things, gradually fade away and disappear; while it was tolerably certain that any allusion made by others, and more especially by a husband, would go further to confirm what he considered a mere idle imagination, than to efface it from a woman's mind. Time, and a husband's constant affection, would best do that. Thus he argued, and not unreasonably.

She, on her side, was still less inclined to speak, ashamed at heart, though enslaved. So, by a tacit compromise, a veil was drawn across what each believed, though with opposite feelings, to be an empty shadow of the past, devoid of act or purpose; and their mutual confidence, entire as beseemed husband and wife, on every other topic of daily occurrence, except this one, threw this particular reserve so far into the background of life as

to render it indistinct, and, both believed, unimportant. Now, however, on this unhappy night, not only had the veil long and carefully maintained, been suddenly and violently torn away, but there appeared distinct behind the rent, not an unsubstantial memory, an ineffective fancy, a fading dream, but a present and terrible fact. Unwelcome to him; but was it equally unwelcome to her?

Much he thought it over, but found no satisfactory conclusion to his thoughts. Deeply, cruelly wronged though he felt himself to have been, there was no redress to be had; no reparation was possible now. Jealous? of what? Of an affection that had never been his? Freely, unquestioned, his wife had herself made the avowal. Anger?—revenge? But she had thrown not herself only, but his rival—his successful rival, so far as love was concerned—on his mercy. True, wife, or whatever else in name, Selma could henceforth be nothing to him. She was not his, but Alkamah's. Not even the latter's death could restore—restore what? She had never been his.

But Okeyl still loved his wife, more than he himself knew; and love, whatever some have asserted, though it may be gradually weakened, and so at last destroyed, cannot be killed and drop down dead in an instant. And from this love, joined to his own natural generosity of character, sprung a great pity; pity extending not over her only, but even over his rival, and leading him to blame not them, but destiny; or rather to acquiesce in what seemed to him the working of a higher decree, from which none could escape, neither he nor they. And thus the only result he reached was to confirm himself more strongly than ever in the resolution he had first made. He would act as though they were strangers to him;—no, not strangers, but kinsfolk, brother and sister, in his tenderness towards them, and leave the rest to fate. "Come of it what may," he said to himself, "I shall not then be to blame; and as for them, they must abide by the consequences of their own doings; I will not interfere. But I wish—well, there is no good in wishing this or that now: God help us all." In this disposition he turned from the night, already in the dead stillness that precedes the first gleam of

dawn, and went into the tent. Selma lay there, moaning in deep sleep; he looked at her for a minute or two, then sought a distant corner of the tent and lay down also, but did not close his eyes.

The dawn had broke, but a few of the larger stars were yet in the sky, when the herdsman returned from his message, and with him Shebeeb. From this last Okeyl learnt every particular of Alkamah's story, from first to last: how the lad, after being wounded and made prisoner in the Hejaz, had escaped thence and returned to Roweydah; how his own family, hoping to cure him of his attachment for Selma, had attempted to convince him of her death, and for a while succeeded; how after two years he had become aware that she was yet alive—only at this point of his tale Shebeeb made no mention of the part he had taken in undeceiving his kinsman; how, knowing nothing as to Malik's daughter except that she had returned to her own land, they had set out in search of her, till they had come hither. But by what chance they had been led to look for her no longer in Nejran, but Yemamah, he did not say, nor would Okeyl, whatever thoughts may have crossed his mind, condescend to ask.

Was it, however, without some secret pleasure that Okeyl heard how much his rival had suffered—that recovery from the condition in which he now lay was hopeless—that his days, nay, his hours, were numbered? To have wished it otherwise he must have been more than man, or less. Yet more fully, perhaps, more bitterly than before, he felt, as Shebeeb proceeded in his recital, that his rival's death, however speedy, must needs come too late; that Selma as she had been could never more be his. Broken glass, broken troth, broken love: death, theirs or his, might sweep the fragments away, but could not mend them.

The sun was just rising when Selma awoke, pale and weak; she trembled as she stood up. Her husband took her in his arms, and kissed her—for the last time. "Come," he said. Shebeeb was waiting outside.

Closely veiled from head to foot, and supported between two of her maidservants—for she tottered at every step, and without assistance must have fallen—she left the tent; and, never

speaking a word or asking a question, unconscious seemingly of whither they were going, or why, followed her husband. Shebeeb led the way. In this order they passed, without meeting anyone, beyond the limits of the camp; crossed the valley, keeping at some distance, from the village, till they reached the abrupt mountain foot, and entered a deep winding gorge, which at last brought them to the lonely valley and cave, till then almost unknown and nameless: it received a name that day.

While these things were going on, Alkamah had remained all that night in the heavy trance of fever and extreme weakness; asleep, though seeming to himself awake, and totally unaware either of the herdsman's second visit or of his own companion's movements, coming or going of evening, night, or morning. But in his sleep he was conscious, not of weariness or pain, but of an exquisite happiness; happiness such as his waking hours had not known for years—the fulness of love and life. Now he wandered with Selma under the green, transparent shade of a spring orchard, leaf and blossom, where birds sang sweet on the boughs around them, and cool crystal waters went flowing at their feet; her face was turned to him, a sweet girl's face, one smile; their talk was all of love. Then they were again together in another place, where he could not tell: it seemed a dwelling, yet there were neither walls, nor roof, nor any bound; nothing was distinct, not even her form or face, nor movement, nor voice; only her presence encompassed him in great love and peace. This too passed, and he was alone, as in days long before, when a child in the quiet noonday solitude of his father's garden by the well; not a care in his mind, not an ache in his limbs, not a want in his heart, happy in the consciousness of youth without the sense of years; full of the life that is unlimited by within or around, beyond all distance or horizon, season or time. It had been his then, it was his once more; the life known to some, if not to many, in early boyhood, when the mind first realises individuality, before the soul has yet divided itself by the later limitations of thought and act from the universe of which it is part; known more often when those limitations are vanishing

away with the phase of existence to which they properly belong.

Thus passed the feverish hours of night, till the secret influences of the morning roused him from dreams to wakefulness, though not at once to any distinct idea; only he was aware of intense but by no means painful lassitude, and of a carelessness of life such as he had never before experienced. Where he was, how he came to be there, what was to happen next, he felt no interest in; he did not even miss Shebeeb from the cave, or conjecture where he might have gone, and on what errand. How quiet everything was! Perhaps he was already dead and buried. Could this be death? this the tomb? He could not have wished it otherwise. Then, in a flash of thought, the image of Selma returned, and with a pang like that of a half-drowned man when drawn out of the water and laid on the bank he returns to consciousness. Alkamah knew that he was still alive, and not yet free to die. One link, though only one, of the life-chain remained to break, but he felt that the touch of the hand which would seem to reunite it indissolubly with the past, would by that very act snap it for ever; that she, the angel of life, was also the appointed angel of death to him. The thought was comfort. So he lay there and waited, the fingers of one hand clasped over those of the other, where the signet-ring had been, as if to assure that it was absent on its message now, and to prepare for replacing it when its work should be over, not to be removed again. It was otherwise ordained.

He would not, so dulled were his senses, have noticed or even heard the footsteps approaching the cavern, had there not been among them the tread for which he had so often in days gone by watched eagerly, as for the bringer of all his happiness; then it had been light, firm, and quick; now it was uncertain, slow, and faltering; but changed as that step was, and dying as were his own ears, they caught the sound and instantly recognised it; nothing short of actual death could have disguised it from them. With an instinctive effort, which would have been beyond whatever deliberate strength remained him, he half raised

himself from the ground where he was lying; he would have risen and gone to meet her, but his feet and knees were paralysed and powerless now. Leaning forward, he strained his dim gaze, fixed on the entrance of the cave.

It was darkened by the group without. Shebeeb, and Okeyl with him, would have been the first to enter; but Selma, who during the way thither had appeared like one entranced, scarcely able to move but for the help of her maids, and every moment on the point of sinking down between them, now by a quick effort shook herself loose of them, threw aside her veil, and forced her way to the front. Self-respect, the presence of strangers, of her husband, present shame, after reproach, all had vanished, except the remorseful love that urged her on, regardless of everything besides. With a staggering eagerness that stumbled over its own haste, she went straight towards him who in that moment was all the world to her; the others astonished, awestruck even, stood aside: they felt they had no part nor right in such a meeting.

Alkamah strove once more to rise, but could not. He stretched out his arms to her as she came forward; his lips moved, but uttered no audible sound. "Alkamah! my love, I am here," said Selma, as she stooped over him. He caught her hands and gazed upwards earnestly, searchingly, into her face; then his own was transfigured by a smile that gave back all the radiance of youth and happy love; an instant more and the smile settled into fixed, peaceful calm, his eyes grew dark, his hold slackened, his head fell on her breast.

Terrified, despairing, "Alkamah, my love, my own!" she exclaimed, "look at me, speak to me but once—speak; say you have forgiven me." There was no voice nor answer from the dead; she fell beside him heavily on the cavern floor.

At first they thought that she too was dead, but it was not so. With care they lifted her up, carried her outside the cave, and laid her where the air blew cool in the mountain shadow; it was a long swoon, but in time she revived. Thus much they knew by her opening her eyes, but she soon closed them again, and neither moved nor stirred, till after a while they brought her

lover's dead body out of the cavern, and prepared to bury it in the sandy soil near the entrance. Then she sat up in her place; and while they arranged and wrapped the limbs and recited the last prayers that commended the dead to his Maker, she looked fixedly on with dry eyes that never flickered or turned aside, till the earth had closed over him whom she had thus seen again, after long separation, to die. When all was over, she hid her face in her hands and wept in silence. But soon she rose. "It has been," she said; and without a word more, or even turning back as she left the valley, she made sign to her maids to follow her, and unsupported returned with her husband to the tent.

There for three days she remained, never once leaving the dwelling, but constantly occupying herself in ordinary household duties, as if nothing had been. Nor did she during all that time make any allusion, either in word or manner, to what had happened; nor even, at least in the presence of others, once shed a tear. On the fourth morning she was gone. They missed her, but waited till noon; she did not return. Then they searched for her, first in the neighbouring tents, afterwards in the village and its gardens; she was not there. But towards evening they found her in the valley of the cave, stretched on the earth by Alkamah's grave, lifeless. The signet-ring was clasped in her hand.

"May God have mercy on her and on him; they were true lovers," said Okeyl, as the grave they dug for her side by side with that of Alkamah, hid for ever from him what he once had called his wife. "I loved her, and would have loved and cherished her to the end; but she was not mine, she never had been mine. She was his, and could not remain separated from him. It was the decree of God."

The event was soon known abroad; and the chiefs of Yemen, who showed every sign of sympathy with Okeyl, sought to retain him amongst them, and more than ever renewed their offers of family alliance. But Yemamah, with its reminiscences was insupportable to him, and before many weeks were over he had struck his tents and returned to his own country. There he

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